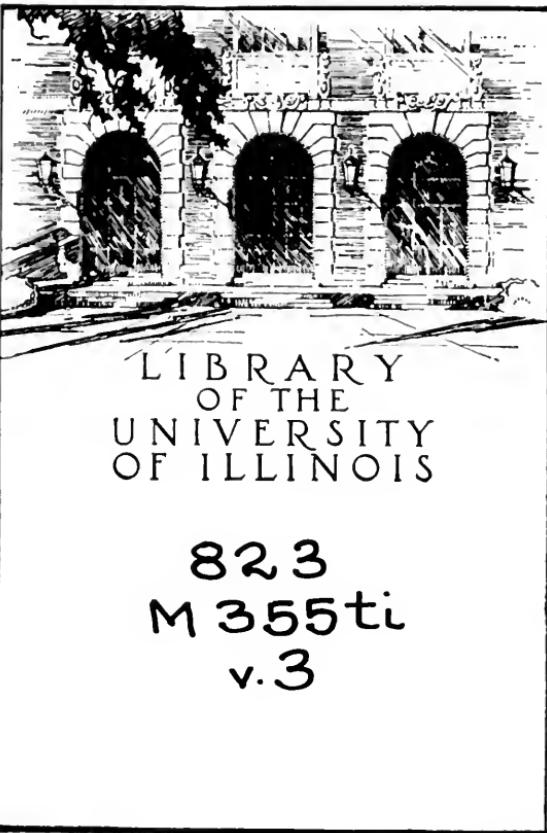






Bibliotheca Lindesiana.

171
—
C



TIME, THE AVENGER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“EMILIA WYNDHAM,” “THE WILMINGTONS,” &c.

“The Word dwelt with me, and its inward light,
By anguish aided, and adversity,
Wrought in my heart an inward change entire.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1851.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY HARRISON AND SON,
ST. MARTIN'S LANE.

823
M355ti
v. 3

TIME, THE AVENGER.

CHAPTER I.

“ Oh, weary, weary thoughts be still !
Oh, life ! why should’st thou be
A thing for only vain regrets
And bitterness to me ?”

W. C. BENNETT.

“ *June 3rd, 17**.*

“ WHAT use is it to talk to me of Valentine
Daubeney ?

“ I think Mrs. Selwyn is crazy about Valen-
tine Daubeney. It is a pretty name, though.
What an odd fatality attends names—Craige-
thorpe—what a name ! And how exactly it
suits !

“Such a hard, dry, unmanageable sort of name—a name one can hardly get out of one’s mouth without breaking one’s teeth.

“Could any woman that ever existed like a man with such a name as that? Ah, me!

“Strange histories are told of the infatuation of woman. I have heard incredible, unbelievable tales, of their wild devotion to almost monsters; as, for instance, that lovely Titania and her cobbler with the ass’s head.

“Ah, the ass’s head! That *was* absurd; but there is something in intellect, in a commanding intellect; in force of character, invincible force of character! Even in insensibility, invincible insensibility, which has such charms for some!

“What’s in a name? says poor Juliet.

“What’s in a name, indeed? When this light fancy can lend charms to any name. This name—this rugged, rough, unmanageable name! . . . It sounds to my ear in a way no other can.

“Charms me by its very roughness.

“Whilst Valentine Daubeney, which Mrs.

Selwyn raves about as a name of names, seems to me I declare I could be as well pleased with that of Jemmy Jessamy.

“Oh! how I have been crying! How foolish, how weak, how contemptible I am!

“How can he be so heartless, so rude, so unkind? What have I done? I have given him, alas! alas!—I have given him this foolish, foolish heart. Does he know it? Does he suspect it, and despise it? Rather die. . . . But why need he be so cross and unkind? Speaking so angrily, as if *my* happiness, *my* peace, *my* enjoyment was nothing—as if he did not care the least bit in the world for me—and I, his ward, his friend’s child—my father’s bequest.

“Oh! it is *too* cruel!

“I am sure I only intended to make a little fun of him. One is so young—one must have a little, little fun. It’s so hard to be always behaving; and he to make such a grave offence

out of a little mischievous joke. One is so very young! One can't be grave and sober all at once—all at once!

“Alas! alas! Poor Lilla!

“He evidently dislikes very much that I should go to this ball.

“Why?

“Ah! that's the question.

“That, why——

“Would I could answer it!

“Of this I am sure—if I thought he had any *good* reason for his repugnance to letting me go—if it were reasonable—if it would only afford an excuse for my giving way—what pleasure should I have in obeying him.

“Obey!

“Some people talk as if obedience were a yoke, a chain, a galling fetter. Oh! it is the sweetest of offerings from a woman to the man she loves—esteems, I mean—sweet to pay, and sweet, I doubt not, to receive.

“Strange situation!—longing as I do to say, ‘Dear Mr. Craiglethorpe, whatever you wish me to do, it is my first, my highest delight to do. Only speak, for I am your slave—I am, I own it. My greatest, my only happiness is to do what you would wish me to do—be as you would have me to be . . .’

“Then why cannot I say this?

“Because all that is womanly in me forbids—because I cannot—my nature will not let me. It is not in woman to betray her poor heart’s secret, unasked, undesired, unresponded to! Who could do that?

“The only possible way to account for my submission would be that which I would rather die than confess—confess to one so utterly cold, insensible, and indifferent to my feelings.

“And, therefore, I plague, and worry, and vex him and myself—and all for what? Ah! misery—only to exasperate his temper, and excite his anger, and fill my poor heart with sorrow, and fear, and bitterness—and anger, too. The vain, but not ungenerous, indigna-

tion of a heart that knows its own value, and feels itself contemned.

“I went to the ball.

“I am so glad I went.

“What a strange thing is this ‘course of life,’ as it is called! How unexpectedly does this flowing current of time, which bears us forward, suddenly turn in a fresh direction upon the appearance of a new object—just as a river might do round some wooded promontory—and the whole aspect of things is at once changed.

“Yesterday it was a current hurrying on, in a sort of broken distraction, between harsh obtruding rocks—to-day it has doubled that wooded point, which I saw looming in the distance, and the waters have spread into a calm and beautiful lake.

“Oh! the delightful influence of sweetness, gaiety, good-humour, and, I may add—why should I not here, here to my bosom confi-

dantes, own it?—the assurance of having inspired admiration and tenderness. Those beautiful, kind, feeling, loving eyes! That sweet, gay, tender smile! That charming countenance, so full of every sort of pleasant expression! And that delightful voice!

“ Valentine Daubeney!

“ No wonder the world is mad about Valentine Daubeney. No wonder this dear, foolish Mrs. Selwyn made such a fuss about him.

“ Though I almost marvel at her good taste; and could feel half inclined to be offended for him—as if such admiration, in a manner lowered him.

“ His manner, too! so simple, so lively, so polite, so free from all affectation and conceit!

“ Well, to be sure, it *was* an enchanting dance that we had together. We literally flew along. How well he danced! Just well enough, and not too well—just enough to look light and gay, and a part of the pleasant lively scene—no more.

“ Then the sit and the chat at the end. How agreeably he rattled away! There was

something delightful even in his rattle—so I thought, at least. Not mere empty froth, like that which I have so often heard from young men, which has so often disgusted me. There was some meaning in it. It was like one of Mrs. Selwyn's dishes of trifle, as she calls them—not mere whipped cream, but all sorts of really rich and good things underneath.

"How refreshing to my spirit it all was!"

"Yes, Mr. Craiglethorpe, you may despise my youth and levity, and scorn the poor young thing who values your approbation but too well—others are less unkind."

"I got up this morning lightened as from an oppressive load, the weight of which I was not fully aware of, till it was removed. The first person I thought of on awakening was *not* Mr. Craiglethorpe—not whether he was still angry, or why he was angry, and what I should do with his anger—whether resent or

attempt to mollify it. The first thought was not this irritating, worrying, tormenting idea. The first thought was of Valentine.

“That sweet-tempered, kind, merry eye of his,—instead of that dark, scowling, intensely gloomy, piercing expression, of which I have thought so foolishly too much. The first things I recollect were all those pleasant words he uttered, and the sweet flattery they implied.

“Ah, what pleasure there is in exciting goodwill!—in having the charming conviction that one pleases!—in being in a sort of atmosphere of kind and indulgent feeling—instinctively assured that all one does will be thought right—all one says or looks, agreeable.

“These cheerful, bright recollections carried me on through the whole of my late dressing, for I was rather late; and then I came down to breakfast, and discussed the ball with Mrs. Selwyn. She told me this charming Valentine was coming to luncheon, which I was very glad to hear; but then—ah me!—after that there was something else I wanted to hear.

“Was there no one else expected that day?

“Would the offended spirit not return to forgive and make it up, and satisfy this uncomfortable restless wish of mine for a reconciliation?

“How can people be so implacable!

“I thought every time Mrs. Selwyn spoke, she was going to tell me of her brother; but I would have died rather than have mentioned him first. But she seemed to have forgotten him, and all about our quarrel,—quite absorbed in the subject of this charming, sweet Valentine.

“I got more and more gloomy; more and more vexed and irritated. It was plain Mr. Craiglethorpe would *not* come—so unkind, so relentless, so unforgiving!

“I was full of these painful mortifying thoughts, when the door opened, and in he came.

“Not the one I was thinking sadly upon, but the other—that dear, sweet-tempered, gentle, gay other.

“ There is quite a magic about so much good-humour : it seemed to dissipate my melancholy like a charm.

“ It was a very sweet day, too ; the sun so bright, the air so fresh and clear, the sky so blue, Mrs. Selwyn’s beautiful shrubberies all so green, so refreshing, and so gay !

“ It was perfectly charming as we all three walked about ; and I thought Valentine still more pleasant in this quiet manner of seeing him, than at the splendid ball of the night before. There was more softness, and perhaps a little less vivacity in his manner ; and it was all the nicer.

“ Softness is such a charming quality.

“ Well, I have spent a very happy day, I believe. But why, perverse rebellious thoughts, why would you persist in painting such a scene —such a day ? and transfer to another those looks so tender and kind ? Why would you persist in transferring those sweet looks to another countenance ?—giving to that dark, stern visage an air of ineffable tenderness, which so well becomes this younger and softer

nature. Oh, why, ungrateful wretch!—unjust!—unkind! would your imagination take the charms which of right belong to one—of which that one has taught you the very existence—to deck with them another, to whom they do not and never can belong—to gild with this treasure of a kinder, better heart, the cold iron of *his* soul!

“It is a moral robbery.”

I have given enough of these artless effusions of a young girl’s pen to put you in possession of the truth of the situation. I have described to satiety the effect produced upon Mr. Craiglethorpe’s feelings when the mere suspicion of the possible truth first began to dawn upon his mind. I leave you to picture to yourself what they must have been at this full confirmation.

They were becoming too intense for outward demonstration; the whole man, body and soul, seemed absorbed in the intense

avidity with which he continued to devour the manuscript.

It went on to describe the gradual progression by which one image at length obscured, though it was never substituted for, the other. It was but too evident throughout, that, in spite of all she could do, her attachment to Mr. Craiglethorpe, though weakened, could not be entirely overcome.

It was plain that the slightest effort on his part at conciliation would have restored her to him, and a declaration of his attachment, could his proud nature have decided upon it, would have made her his.

The attachment to Valentine, as every line disclosed, was not one of those spontaneous outbursts of the heart, arising from that mysterious sympathy which binds with such unaccountable force one human being to another, but the result of the gratitude which a warm, fervent, and disappointed heart feels for kindness, tenderness, and a passionate love which elevates the object of it in her own opinion, and sweetens every day and hour of life.

Who would have believed that, when this generous girl, so fondly repaid by her tenderness,—so ardently defended from censure this very handsome young man,—that this almost angry defence, and this more than common demonstration of affection, arose from an intense feeling of gratitude for a love and kindness which she felt was not ardently returned ; and from the generous wish to make up to Valentine for the want of that sacred devotion which her heart had vainly offered to Mr. Craiglethorpe ?

“ Yes, I own it,—I confess it, my Valentine,—I never can love again as I have once blindly, madly,—with wild infatuation loved. The heart I give you is but half a heart ; the idol lies broken in the shrine, it is true,—the grim Moloch, to whom so many sweet and fresh affections have been offered up ! his image lies broken there. But it has been a fierce struggle,—a bitter, cruel conten-

tion against the almost invincible force of my nature ; a nature which leads me to love the dark, the terrible,—and the great ; to adore power in its severest forms,—and, like another wretched one, choose to perish, so that I might call the mighty one mine.

“ This is over now,—I feel it is over.

“ I cannot be insensible to all this sweetness, love, and devotion,—I cannot be ungrateful to him who asks my heart as the dearest treasure of his existence ; an existence which will be, which is, devoted to make me happy. I cannot be ungenerous to so generous a passion.

“ Yes, Valentine, the triumph is completed. I have torn him from my heart ; over that heart he shall reign no more. But, alas ! my love,—for the broken, desolated ruin after all, that I have to offer *you* !

“ Why did we not meet first ? Why did not you, my tender lover, receive the offering of my first, fresh affection ?

“ But I will find a way to compensate. Yes, my darling Valentine,—passion is not

mine to give, but devotion is, and mine you shall have, dear, delightful Valentine. My whole life shall be devoted to making you happy ; to repaying you for what you have done for me ; for thus taking the poor, discarded, heart-wounded thing to your bosom, and cherishing it to fresh life and happiness. Oh, yes ! I shall be very, very happy with you,—ten thousand times happier than I could ever have been with that cold, haughty nature."

There was an hiatus, after this, of many weeks, in which nothing had been written, and during which it would seem that the progress Valentine had made in her affections had been greatly advanced. A few indignant expressions were set down, which commemorated that day of contention when she and Mr. Craiglethorpe had come to their final rupture.

.... "I quitted him in a rage. I was violent,—I am violent when provoked. Why did he dare to provoke me in this way?

"First, to calumniate Valentine, and then, because I defended him, as I ought to defend him, and will defend him so long as I have breath, to sting me with his insupportable sarcasms.

"I felt that I despised, hated, detested him. Despised him for his disregard of the duties which he owed to the orphan child of his friend,—detested him for his base attempt, thus, at the eleventh hour, by his vile slanders, to alienate a young thing from the only creature breathing who loves her as she wants to be loved. For, say these slanders had some slight foundation in truth, why was I never warned before? A time was, when Valentine was little to me. But here this guardian,—this second parent,—this protector,—this friend, lets me go on forming an attachment, suffering my heart to be wound round by all the endearing ties of gratitude, for a million proofs of affection and love, and

then comes in suddenly, without the slightest feeling on earth for either one or the other, and endeavours to tear us violently asunder. It is not to be endured,—I, at least, will not endure it. And were every word as true, as from my heart I believe them to be scandalously false,—I would link my heart to Valentine's, were it only to defy him."

These are the last extracts I shall give you from this portion of Lilla's manuscripts. I shall say nothing farther of her marriage, or the time immediately succeeding it, except to tell you that there a load of weariness and anxiety begins to penetrate through an attempt at gaiety as the narrative proceeds.

It is plain the young creature pretends to be, rather than is happy. Her heart is of too ardent and devoted a nature to be really filled by a character such as Valentine's. There is a concealed want, an unconfessed dissatisfaction.

You will observe throughout these written confidences with herself, how utterly and completely her heart and her thoughts were occupied with the affairs and interests of this world, and how entirely she was given up to her own natural impulses.

The name of her Creator—any allusion even to His existence never once escapes her. In her misery and disappointment she flies to the creature for consolation and support, and having found it, as she thinks, in his tenderness and devotion, she proceeds at once to rear a fresh idol in the inner temple of her heart.

She dethrones one, and endeavours to substitute another.

Her natural impulses were so generous and so good, that thus left to herself, she went not obviously astray. She proved a tender, faithful wife ; surrounded by the temptations of every kind to which association with a society such as Valentine introduced her to exposed her ; but her life was vacant, useless, and unhappy.

Obvious duties she had few to perform.

Her domestic occupations were light and easily discharged, and she thought not of looking beyond their circle. Indeed, to speak of duties, as regards her, is perhaps a misapplication of terms. She never thought about duties. The pregnant word was as yet a dead-letter to her. She did what was kind and right spontaneously, from the mere sweetness and delicacy of her nature. She had no temptation to go astray from evil dispositions within ; and as her conscience was not awakened to the sense of there being anything wrong in the idle and profitless life she was leading, she never felt self-reproved upon that account.

All she experienced was a sense of insipidity, vanity, worthlessness in the objects about which her time and thoughts were occupied, which rendered her life, after the first flood of novelty was over, tasteless and unhappy.

The gaiety of her husband's spirits, his unceasing,—his never tiring good nature, in spite of his frequent absence ; but above all, his independenee, and power of amusing himself without reference to her, prevented all call

for exertion or self-sacrifice in that quarter ; it forbade also anything like regret, or the exercise of resignation or patience.

It was all the same story. There was nothing sufficiently painful to exercise the virtues which are called forth by suffering,—nothing sufficiently intoxicating to warn and alarm, and call for self-restraint or self-sacrifice. The happiness was too vapid, the dissatisfaction too feeble to stimulate the heart, or arouse the character.

Tepid waters neither stimulate nor strengthen.

This brief description will suffice, I hope, to give you an idea of the unsatisfactory moral state into which this promising young creature was fast sinking, when she was startled into another state of being, by the first faint rumbling thunder of that storm in which she was so fatally to be overwhelmed.

CHAPTER II.

“ Peace he hath promised! O'er thy lone heart's
sadness,
On wings of healing, let this whisper steal,
And breathe around a still and holy gladness,
Such joy as seraphs need not blush to feel.”

MRS. ACTON TINDAL.

I SHALL henceforward rarely deviate from the task of tracing the course of Lilla's thoughts or the progress of her moral life, to describe the sensations with which Mr. Craiglethorpe read the narrative. To find, without the possibility of a doubt, that he had been all along the secret master of that heart which it would have constituted his highest earthly felicity to possess ; and that “like the base Indian, he had cast a pearl away higher than all its tribe,” affected him with a regret almost as piercing

as that sword with which Othello expiated his fatal mistrusts.

As the narrative proceeded, however, personal feelings were almost lost in the intensity of interest with which he followed what ensued.

It had been hard for him to reconcile in imagination the pale, patient, suffering, heroic being, whose portrait, as painted by Mrs. Benfield, had closed that good lady's relation, with the gay, brilliant, wilful girl, radiant in health and beauty, at once so faulty and so enchanting, whose image still possessed his imagination. The contrast was too suddenly presented. It seemed unreal. He could not believe that this picture of gentle fortitude and sorrow could belong to the same. But now he was possessed of the means to trace the progress of this change. The gradual development, under a far wiser and tenderer Hand than his, of those latent fine qualities in which lay the secret, though undisclosed, of her fascination.

He might now learn, that great as is the

power mankind is allowed to exercise, important as are our influences for good or bad over each other—there is another Agent perpetually in action upon every individual character.—And that is the course of irresistible external circumstances ; and the working in unison with them of those principles within the heart which alone lift the human being above this world, and open to him expectations,—hopes,—responsibilities, and reliances, of a far nobler and more important kind. He is thus brought at last into that communion with the higher Nature, so awful—so astounding—so terrifying in its immensity and power. The *One*, infinite in benevolence as infinite in presence, on whom the lost and deserted one—shipwrecked as to this world's hopes or consolations—casts herself at last in childlike confidence and finds protection and support. Drinking in as from some rich cordial, the motives for higher modes of action, in the gratitude, love, and devotion, which such a communion inspires.

He learned that though he might have been,

and had failed to be, the protector and guide of this young, ardent-minded creature—though he had rejected the delightful task of securing her safety, and forming her happiness—the part he had rejected would not therefore be left unperformed. He had refused to be the instrument of good—but should good therefore be left utterly undone ?

When all human aid fails ;—when human confidence and friendships have proved false—there is One who will not fail us, nor forsake us—who has left the treasure of his legacy behind Him. A Testament indeed sufficient to provide for us all.

It was with new feelings awakening in his own heart—feelings to which he had till then been a stranger, that Mr. Craiglethorpe read on.

“ I am not happy.

“ What is the use of disguising it to myself ?

“ Why carry on in this secret chamber the

farce I am acting before all the world ? Why persist in endeavouring to delude myself with an empty shadow, and pretend that it is a substantial reality ?

“I am *not* happy.

“Why am I not happy?

“I have everything upon earth to make a reasonable creature happy.

“Everything esteemed luxurious, either as it gratifies taste, or ministers to health, use, or amusement, is mine. Everything that money can purchase is mine. I have a gay, kind, agreeable husband,—and if I do see somewhat less of him than many wives seem to do of theirs, I have no cause to complain. Indeed, I don’t know that I do see less than others ; for if my husband is a good deal out in an evening, he is at home most mornings, which theirs rarely are ; and we ride, and walk, and visit together. We always dine out, when invited, together, and it is not till quite late when it is almost time for me to go to bed, that he steps out to take a walk, or call upon some of his men friends, and so on.

“ It would be too unreasonable to grudge him that little amusement, and too childish to refer my want of spirits to that cause.

“ I am not happy—that is true enough. It is vain to pretend to myself that I am ; but it would be too unjust to attribute my unhappiness to Valentine ; for I am sure he does everything in his power to make me content—Studies my wishes in every respect—and is the kindest husband ever woman had.

“ What can be the reason, then, that I am not happy ?

“ Oh ! the word falters at the end of my pen—I almost fear to write it, it is so true.

“ Stagnation !

“ I am becalmed upon an unruffled sea. Not a breath of wind stirs the flagging sail. Not a ripple is upon the water. The scene is pleasing ; the air soft and warm ; but oh ! the insupportable weariness of such a time.

“ I remember three such days upon the Mediterranean as I was coming to England. I found them insupportable. Little did I

imagine that they were to form a sort of type—give me a foretaste, as it were, of my future life?

“What is life?—Why this purposeless being? Why this hidden, gnawing sense of dissatisfaction? That pretty crimson and purple butterfly, that comes fluttering round the clematis round the window—leads such a life as mine. A life of mere enjoyment. It is happy—evidently quite happy. Why am I so sad and discontented?

“Perhaps, if I had been destined to that fate which I once believed was to have been mine, I should have been happier; merely because I should have had many, many things, I am sure, to vex me.

“I should not have been nearly so kindly treated—there would have been hardships, and roughness, perhaps cruelty, perhaps barbarity! How could I have endured that?

“Oh, very well! It would have called forth I know not what—but something within me that longs to be called forth. I want some-

body to please, whom it requires exertion and attention to please. Somebody with powers and faculties above my own, that would draw out my own. Something to have to do which it requires pains and self-sacrifice to accomplish, and some one to whom to make an offering of such sacrifice and pains.

“Happiness appears to me to consist in progress—in feeling one’s life devoted to a purpose ever accomplishing and never accomplished. Living under the eye of one kindly interested in one’s exertions, yet never altogether satisfied ; always requiring more—as one does in a manner by oneself.

“I should have found all the sterner part of this picture in that man, but the softer and tenderer would have been wanting, I feel sure ; —and those Valentine has—and, oh ! base and ungrateful heart ! not to make a better return for all his love and indulgence.

“I am induced to tear this page out of my book. To revert to that man now, seems a sort of blasphemy to my love for Valentine. He so kind, and the other so barbarous, and

shall I be such a vile wretch as to draw a comparison !

“ What is it that makes good Benfield look so anxious and uneasy ? What is it that seems to be drawing like a cloud over our little household ?

“ Why, especially, is Valentine so moody and out of spirits at times—at others so almost extravagantly gay ?

“ When I ask him why he is gloomy, he denies the charge, and begins to laugh and whistle in an unnatural manner ; when I inquire why he is so exuberantly happy, he denies the charge too, and laughs at me for being so fanciful about him, or half scolds me for troubling myself to take account of his humours.

“ No man can be the same at all times, he says.

“ I know that as well as he does—but see a radical change, and cannot help seeing a radical change in him.

" If Valentine is beginning to cease to care for me, why then farewell.

" It is a proper punishment for me, whose perverse temper refused to be contented when every circumstance contributed to my happiness. If life seemed flat and purposeless when I had him and his sweet charming affection to enliven it, what is it going to be now? It wanted objects, as I thought. The scene in which I lived wanted objects—but the sun shone bright, and the heaven was blue, smiling, and unclouded. How am I to endure the same scene, when there is neither sun nor blue sky to enliven it, but a heavy, grey atmosphere, and sky, without the sunlight—I don't know.

" Benfield looks graver than ever. There is a meaning in all this gravity. Shall I ask her—or shall I not ask her?

" She must have observed the change in Valentine's manner of life, and the more painful change in his manner to me. He goes out at all hours, even sometimes in a morning, and comes back I know not when—sometimes not

till quite late in the morning following—five or six o'clock, it may be ; and when he does come in, he is quite restless or absorbed. He has nothing to say to me ; looks ill and haggard, but evidently impatient to be away again.

“If I venture to remark upon this, he is displeased and peremptory ; and though not absolutely cross, certainly not kind. And as for all friendly confidence—all pleasant chat—all companionship of any sort, that is quite at an end.

“I don’t know what I do here—I don’t know what I was born for. I came into the world a beautiful, useless being. I *did* gladden the eyes of my poor father whilst he lived—I *had* something to live for then. He did not require, but he evidently took delight in my performance of a thousand little duties which I owed to him. Under his eye I had what I wanted—some one to look up to with reverence and gratitude—some one to honour and

earnestly desire to please ; but since his death, what have I had to do on earth ?—What am I good for ?—and why am I here ?

“ There is not a creature wants me, or cares for me ; and as to enjoying life for myself alone, who can do that ? One is soon weary of that.

“ Valentine used to tell me—vain flatterer ! that I was necessary to his happiness ! So I might be whilst the fancy lasted ; I am sure I am not so now.

“ Sometimes I wish I were fast asleep at the bottom of the cool, transparent water that flows at the end of the garden. I wonder why it would be wrong.

“ Nobody would miss me except poor Mrs. Benfield a little, perhaps ; and to endure to live merely for her sake, seems absurd. I lose more by living than she would by my dying.

“ I don’t understand why I live—why I am withheld from seeking the rest I long for, by a sort of internal repugnance to the means.

“ Why, I feel as if it were wrong.

“ What an unaccountable thing, by the way,

it is, this internal voice which so obstinately sticks to its opinion about right or wrong.

“I have observed this curious part of my mind often, but not with so much attention as I ought. I have heard in sermons mention made of the ‘monitor within;’ but I usually listen to those stupid affairs in such a heedless manner, that they make little or no impression upon me.

“But I certainly recollect the expression of the ‘monitor within.’

“How comes it there? It is like another person speaking to me.

“And what does it say?

“Ah, me! It says, ‘What a useless—useless, murmuring, discontented life are you leading here!’ To which I reply, ‘How can *I* help it?’ But that answer does not and will not satisfy it.

“Strange, that my own answer which satisfies myself, should not satisfy myself!

“ Oh, misery! misery! What shall I do?—Where shall I fly for help and counsel?—What shall I do?

“ His father—my true, real, and faithful friend—cast, without the least previous warning, upon a bed of sickness; his mother in nearly as deplorable a state; and Valentine!—my husband!—my Valentine! the fatal—fatal cause of all this!

“ Oh, horrors of horrors!—a Gamester’s wife!

“ How often have I read in stories, or seen acted upon the stage, the hideous history of a gambler—the wretched one of his wife! And now this fate is mine—this history his!

“ And, oh! my poor, sweet, innocent little baby—darling of my eyes!—treasure of my heart!—what is to become of you—of all of us? For I know it but too well; he will not be persuaded—he will persist in this dreadful infatuation.

“ Benfield is gone, too—my last—I may say, my only friend.

“ She was a wise, good woman, and loved me, I am sure. Perhaps she was the only person in the world, except my ever-honoured father, who really ever did love me. Mrs. Selwyn a little, perhaps ; but she has been lost to me long ago. She followed her husband to Canada, and there she died, poor woman. I did not grieve about that much at the moment—distance is like time in deadening the feelings—but now I feel as if I would give anything for a friend, even such a friend as she was, poor thing. I would give anything to see her again, for she loved me in her way. She intended always by me as a friend, though, perhaps, not a very efficient one, poor, dear, silly woman.

“ Now my eyes are opened, I begin to understand the causes of my past life in England, and why this was said and that done. I begin to suspect, that what I resented as the injustice of jealousy or mere caprice of temper, had, after all, a better foundation—that it was

intended to warn me against a terrible risk. When one, who ought to have been my friend, spoke to me in that way which made me so angry, was I not very unreasonable to be so angry? And if he so little understood me, as his conduct to me showed, was I not equally unjust to him? Ah, Valentine, Valentine! Was it for you to open my eyes? Now I begin to understand at last the reason of the dislike my husband took to poor Benfield, and his importunity with me to get rid of her.

“ Benfield was a sagacious woman. She kept her eyes open; she watched and understood this matter but too well.

“ Now I understand her melancholy, meaning looks when she parted from me—her hesitating, uncertain manner, as if she had something she wanted to say.

“ At one time seeming resolved to say it—then hesitating again, and ending by saying nothing. The tears were in the good creature’s eyes at the time.

“ And yet I was not moved as I ought to

have been—as in common gratitude for her long-tried affection I ought to have been.

“ My heart was hardened then—hardened by levity. What is so hardening as levity?

“ I thought little—I seemed to have given up thinking. I have been perfectly awakened from that idle dream. I shall not offend by want of thought again.

“ Poor Benfield! To think, that after all the care and tenderness of so many years, I *could* part from you as I did.

“ Not without some feeling ; but, ah ! with little in comparison to what I ought to have felt.

“ It ought to have been like the plucking up of some plant deeply rooted among the fibres of my heart. It was but as the severance of a branch.

“ Valentine’s unceasing insinuations had set me against her, that is the simple fact.

“ He had taught me to distrust her. He had led me to believe that she would prove a busy meddler between him and me.

“ That she was striving to govern me—and did govern me.

“ There is nothing—no, not jealousy itself—that so alienates as such suspicions. Nothing that so sets one mind against another. Of all distrusts it is the most fatal. There is nothing that liberty-loving inexperience resents so heartily, or resists so pertinaciously, as a yoke of this nature.

“ And Valentine had taught me to believe this of Benfield.

“ And all her cares and anxieties; or me having taken this colour, were ungratefully received, nay, often almost disliked, and resented accordingly.

“ Poor Benfield !

“ Poor Benfield ! her life had been a painful one enough at last I fear ; what between her anxiety for one she loved as a child, and, ah ! her too, too well grounded fears, and my increasing alienation, under the influence of one whom she loved I verily believe, too, but watched and distrusted out of affection for me.

“ I shall not easily forget that face of hers

as "she went away ; her eyes swimming in tears, whilst mine were quite dry, though I did press her hand, and kiss her, and say all I could think of that was kind and affectionate.

" But the true touch was not there, and the good creature felt it.—Well, *she* is happy. Married to a worthy creature, if ever there was one, who has long been devoted to her, and though he is older than she is, what matters that ?

" The happiest marriages are upon that plan, I think.

" And they are gone to the Levant, and I may never see her more,—never, never !

" And now what am I to do ? Whom have I to look to,—whom to trust,—where to seek a guide,—what to do ?

" Mr. Daubeney, that good and kind old man, who has been like a second father to me, will never counsel the poor Lilla more ; he lies upon his sick bed, incapable of thought or exertion. Struck down—alas ! the cause of it ! I guess it but too well ; and good Mrs.

Daubeney ! why, poor woman, who takes counsel from her ?

“ And then to think that my husband—the friend from whom every woman looks for advice and guidance, should be the very being on account of whom I feel so terribly in want of advice.

“ What shall I do ? what ought I to do ? or rather what can I do ?

“ Shall I remonstrate ?

“ I tried that once, but he stopped my mouth imperiously, and said, that he had not taken a wife to play the preacher to him ; that he knew how to take care of himself ; and even if he did not, would not impose that task upon me. That no whimpering of a wife would ever turn him from what he was inclined to do. He must judge for himself, and would judge for himself.

“ I was sorry that I could not restrain my tears, crying, as he says, seldom does good, but I have been so little used to control my feelings, that when I did begin to speak, and I had my little baby in my lap too at the

time, altogether it quite overcame me, I burst into a fit of hysterical crying.

“Time was when this would have made him so sorry, that he would have relented at once, but that time is over. Valentine is greatly changed; all that sweet softness of temper, so delightful to me, and which endeared him to me so much is gone,—he is moody, irritable, uncertain.

“It scarcely seems as if he loved me at all.

“His whole mind appears absorbed in this one fatal pursuit.

“There are intervals, intervals of remorseful feeling, and I never shall forget the paroxysm of distress he was in when his father was first struck down,—it was a perfect whirlwind of passionate self-reproach.

“But, unhappily, nothing lasts long with Valentine. A few weeks,—nay, a few days, and the impression seemed to have past away. His father’s illness and his mother’s distress appeared to have become matters of course. He was sorry for everybody, and kind and attentive when at home, but he was very often not at home.

“ What a maze am I in !

“ Sometimes I pluck up a heart, I endeavour to look circumstances in the face ; I ask myself how I can meet beggary and ruin ; at times I feel spirited and full of courage, but that soon dies away, and is succeeded by the blackest despondency.

“ I did not think that I was such a coward. I thought I held these worldly matters cheaper than I find I do. What is to become of my little child ?—What shall I do with Valentine ?—What shall I do with myself ?

“ Will he,—shall I be able patiently to bear poverty,—to suffer a decline in our way of life, a loss of our social position ?—Embarrassment,—debt,—I know not what,—perhaps to be turned into the streets.

“ What has not a gamester been brought to ?—I have read hideous histories.

“ My whole mind is in confusion, and a horror of deep distress is upon me.

“ Oh, what will become of me !—What shall I, shall I do !

“ I am so thoroughly miserable, I do not know which way to turn.

“ I want Benfield now. If I had Benfield I should at least have somebody to talk over my misery with.

“ I think if I do not open my heart to some one, I shall go distracted.

“ Last night Valentine was out all night,— he did not come back till seven o'clock in the morning.

“ I heard him go into his dressing-room, just as seven o'clock was striking, and he flung himself down upon his bed there, and fell into a feverish sleep, I suppose, for so I found him when I came to his room some hours afterwards. Mr. Miller, the head clerk, came to speak to him between eleven and twelve, and when he found he was not yet down, looked very much disturbed, and very grave.

“ He hesitated a little before speaking, and then said,—

“ ‘ I beg your pardon, madam, but I hope,—I hope Mr. Valentine was not out *very* late last night.’

“ I hesitated in my turn.

“ He understood what that meant, I believe, sighed, and said no more on that subject, but went on with,—

“ ‘ I should be glad to speak to Mr. Valentine as soon as I could. There are bills of his to a very considerable amount, of the existence of which I was quite unaware, and to meet which we are not exactly prepared. I must speak to him about them as soon as it can be made convenient, madam, if you please.’

“ ‘ Shall I go up and tell him so ? he is probably awake by this time, but he is often late in a morning.’

“ ‘ I should be very much obliged to you, madam, if you would, the affair is a pressing one.’

“ I went up to his dressing-room and knocked at his door. I never go in now without knocking; he did not answer, and I thought he was probably still asleep, so I opened the door as gently as I could, but was startled by his quick sharp voice,—his manner is very quick and sharp at times now,—calling out,—

“ ‘ Who’s there ? ’

“ ‘ It is only I.’

“ ‘ Only I !—Who’s I ?—Oh ! is it you, Lilla ? What the deuce are you come for ?—Can a man never have any rest ?’

“ ‘ I am sorry to disturb you, but Mr. Miller is down below, waiting for you in the breakfast-room.’

“ ‘ Well, and if Mr. Miller is waiting in the breakfast-room, is that a reason for disturbing *me* ? Let him wait—I am bothered enough already, I can tell you that, Lilla. If you knew all and the old tiresome fellow must come with one of his confounded proses about business. He makes me sick of business. Let him settle the business as seems him best, and leave me in peace. He understands my father’s affairs better than I do—or thinks he does.’

“ I never saw anything so haggard as Valentine looked, as I stood by his side, listening to him, whilst he spoke in this hasty, irritable manner. He seemed consuming with internal fever. I was struck with the change

in his looks, for the first time. He is so aged. His beautiful complexion has faded, as if fifty years had passed over his head ; his skin is grown dry, yellow, wrinkled ; his eyes are sunk and burning.

“ ‘ You do not look well, Valentine.’

“ ‘ A man is not very likely to look well who has passed such a cursed time as I did last night,’ he said, impatiently, and turning his face to the wall. ‘ Can’t you leave one in peace ? Go and tell Miller what I say. He understands my father’s business better than I do. Let him manage it all his own way.’

“ ‘ I believe it is not about Mr. Daubeney’s business, but yours, Valentine.’

“ ‘ Mine ! What do you mean by mine ?’

“ ‘ I don’t understand enough to tell you ; but he said bills—bills of yours—that were become due, and must be met. I don’t know what he means by bills ; I don’t think we have a great many. I—’

“ ‘ Bills !’ starting up from his bed, outside of which he was lying in his dressing-gown, ‘ What day of the month is it ?’

“ ‘The twenty-seventh, I believe.’

“ ‘What a cursed fool I am, to let such a thing escape my memory! Tell Miller I’ll be down with him in three seconds.’

“ It was not three seconds, but nearly three-quarters of an hour before Valentine actually made his appearance.

“ Mr. Miller was very fidgety and impatient.

“ Sometimes he walked up and down the room in a troubled manner—sometimes he opened the door and listened.

“ ‘ You said, madam—I beg your pardon—that Mr. Valentine was certainly coming.’

“ ‘ Yes—shall I go again?’ I added, unwillingly; for I dreaded to go again, lest Valentine should be angry at my impatience.

“ At last he came.

“ ‘ Leave me and Mr. Miller together,’ said he, authoritatively, as he entered the room.

“ He was looking very pale.

“ I obeyed and went up into my little sitting-room, and sat there, doing nothing; for I really could neither read nor work, my

fingers trembled so. I felt certain that something disagreeable had happened, though I could not quite understand what.

“I sat myself down at the window, and looked down into this silent, solitary court, at the head of which this magnificent old mansion stands, looking so grand and so imposing,—such an emblem, as I always think, of wealth acquired by a mighty mercantile house, such as we imagine that of the Medici or the Adorni, in the palmy days of Florence or Genoa, to have been.

“I always feel proud when I am in this mansion. There is something in the seeming gravity, the grandeur, and air of stability, which surrounds me, that makes me feel elevated in my own opinion, because I am the daughter of such a man as Mr. Daubeney.

“I sat there, pondering upon the industry and perseverance which, carried on from generation to generation, had raised this great mercantile firm to such a pitch of splendour; and I felt that vain security in the permanence of its elevation which I suppose the

mighty monarch might have felt when he walked about in the pride of his heart, and said:

“ ‘Is not this the great Babylon which I have founded?’

“ I have read in some history of Holland, I think, of those mighty piles which have been builded to resist the force of the waves, and how a little worm, or a little shell-fish, I forget which, gradually works its way, unperceived, under the waters, undermining the vast fabric of human industry; and all is ruin.

“ Such thoughts did not suggest themselves that morning, however, as I sat there—I was lost in admiration, as I looked down upon the splendid façade of the grand old house, and felt almost reverence for the industry and skill which had reared this splendid fortune, of which it was the type.

“ I had sat there, I dare say, above an hour, when there was a knock at my door.

“ ‘Come in,’ I said, without turning my head, thinking it was the maid; and Mr. Miller, followed by Valentine, entered.

"I stood up, surprised. What did Valentine knock at my door for? That was a strange ceremony on his part. And why was Mr. Miller with him?

"'We are sorry to disturb you, Lilla, my dear,' began Valentine.

"'Disturb me! Pray, Mr. Miller, be seated.'

"The old man was looking very white—his eyes were cast down—he slightly trembled.

"'Pray sit down,' I said, pushing a chair to him, doing the honours of my room.

"He obeyed and sat down, making a sign as he did so.

"'And you, Lilla, sit down, too,' said Valentine, drawing himself a chair; 'for we are come to talk to you about a little business.'

"I sat down, rather flurried. Mr. Miller's face bore such a very painful expression, that it was impossible not to be struck by it. It frightened me—I did not know why.

'There was a short silence, as if nobody

quite liked to speak first. At last, Valentine, in a quick, hurried manner, began:

" ' You must know, my dear Lilla, that I am rather in a fix that is to say you know, my love, I am not the steadiest creature in the world—never was; but I intend, I assure you, to turn over quite a new leaf. In short, my dear, it will not be news to you that I have been a little too fond of sitting up at night, and that there are certain bewitching occupations which, hang me, I know I ought, but I really find it impossible, to resist and, in short, luck has lately run confoundedly against me. Fortune is the veriest jade, I believe, in the world, and takes quite a pleasure in tormenting a poor devil like myself—but—well. The run *has* been against me. It's no use making a fine story to you about it, or telling you how a man goes on, in spite of himself, beguiled by a sort of hope. To tell truth, a rational hope —for, you see, every run against him increases the chances in his favour for the next throw;

and who is poltroon enough to bear to go away a loser? I am not, at least . . . so, in short—Mr. Miller, you told my wife at breakfast about these cursed bills, I believe—they are become due, and must be met—and the deuce knows where the money is to come from.'

" ' Bills!—due!—Valentine! I don't understand—Mr. Miller, I don't understand.'

" ' Madam,' said Mr. Miller, slowly, ' do you not understand the nature of bills and acceptances?'

" ' Not I—how should I?—and what is all this to me?'

" Upon which the good old man began patiently to explain to me all about it. But I am not clear how such things are managed; and even if I were, what use would there be in putting it all down here. In short, that which I understood was, that Valentine had bills coming due, for large sums, that very day, and that somehow the affairs of the house, since Mr. Daubeney's illness, had got into such a state, that it was not easy to meet

this call, though the whole credit of the firm depended upon this being done without the least apparent difficulty ; and so on

“ And then Mr. Miller, with an expression of pain in his face, which I never shall forget, the shame and sorrow were so mingled, and the suffering from such feelings seemed so acute, went on to explain that my fortune—twenty thousand pounds—had been, through the liberality of Mr. Daubeney (my own guardian having refused to interfere in the matter), placed by my marriage settlement at my own entire disposal ; and would I, would I lend it to Mr. Valentine till the affairs of the house were in a little better condition ; so that he might be enabled at once to take up these bills, and save his father’s credit and his own ?

“ I am not fond of money ; I do not care for money. It was not because the money was mine that I felt startled and confounded, quite dizzy at this proposal.

“ It was a strange sensation. I felt as if everything upon the stability of which I most

relied was reeling round me ; as if I saw that very house, in the strength and security of which I had the moment before taken such pride, rocking to the foundation, and tottering to its fall.

“ In want of twenty thousand pounds ! I had lived long enough among wealthy merchants to know what a trifle twenty thousand pounds was esteemed by them.

“ I did not immediately answer.

“ Mr. Miller sat there gravely waiting till I spoke ; but Valentine said, in a hasty manner, as if he was quite hurt at the least hesitation upon my part,—

“ ‘ You hesitate, Lilla, I did not expect this from you.’

“ ‘ No, you mistake ; I don’t, I was only . . . ’

“ ‘ The young lady does right to pause, Mr. Valentine,’ said Mr. Miller, gravely. ‘ Pray do not hurry her ; such things require reflection.’

“ ‘ No, no,’ cried I ; ‘ hesitate ! I don’t hesitate. Take it all—anything, everything I have ; don’t let Mr. Daubeney be ruined.’

“ ‘I hope, I believe, I trust,’ said Miller, laying his trembling white hand upon the table, and speaking with much emotion, ‘I trust there is no danger of that—will be no danger of such a tremendous disaster as that. This house, Mr. Valentine Daubeney, is not a creation of yesterday; this is the third generation of those who have maintained it in prosperity and honour. My father and my father’s father in this house have served. It is a strange day when a member of the house of Daubeney comes to *solicit* advances instead of being entreated to grant them. Mr. Valentine, will you not assure this generous young lady that it shall be the last time such a proceeding shall ever be rendered necessary by you?’

“ ‘ You make a great matter, methinks, Mr. Miller of borrowing twenty thousand pounds,’ said Valentine.

“ ‘ I do, sir ; it is the first step in a fearful road your honoured father never thought to tread ; it is the first step in that road which leads to embarrassment—leads to ruin. Retrace it, sir ; take it back, sir.’

“ ‘ What do you mean by retrace it? Do you suppose we shall not pay the money in three months?’

“ ‘ Certainly, and without the slightest doubt, so there be no more acceptances out; and even if there should now be, so that we may rest assured, Mr. Valentine, that those will be the last.’

“ ‘ Rest assured, by all means, Mr. Miller. I am tired of her tricks, and here make a divorce from Madam Fortune for ever.’

“ ‘ Really and truly, Mr. Valentine. Not as it was made once before?’

“ ‘ Pooh! nonsense! The thing is more serious now; you may trust me. You are a good, generous girl, Lilla, and shall not lose your money, depend upon it.’ ”

CHAPTER III.

“I see the Pilgrim toiling,
With sword and armour foiling
The tempter and the Lion ;
Straight by the Palace Beautiful,
Toils on the soldier dutiful,
On to the hill of Zion.”

MRS. HENRY SANDBACH, *Aurora*.

“THINGS get worse and worse.

“Mr. Daubeney continues very ill; he gets no better; and everybody seems to say will not be long in this state.

“We are returned to our house near Richmond; for, indeed, both my health and my little baby’s health began to suffer, shut up in town as we were; and so impossible to help fretting, too !

“I am better away. What use is it for me to know that Valentine, after an interval of

one short month, has resumed his usual habits ? Was it not enough to kill me to lie awake as I did, wearying myself with waiting for his return ; and in a state of feverish, restless agitation—half anger, half sorrow ?

“I tried to remonstrate. I have been warm, vehement, earnest—all in vain. I am too hot and hasty. I want patience and self-command. I am so utterly, utterly miserable.

“I do not know what to do, whither to turn.

“At all events, I did no good, and I am quite as well here.

“I am more quiet, at least ; and my spirits less fretted and worried. Anything is better than the nursing of that constant feeling of dissatisfaction ; dissatisfied with myself, indignant at him. Never able to bring my mind to the state into which it ought to be brought ; for I feel that fortitude is demanded, and that a dignified silence upon my part, might be, perhaps, the best remedy that I could apply to these fearful evils.

“But I have no fortitude. How can I ? I

am not capable of that self-support and self-command, which others in my place would practise, I doubt not ; I am a poor, weak creature.

“So as I did no good where I was, and suffered more than I could bear, I thought I should be better anywhere else ; indeed, the heat of the town seemed to suffocate me ; and to live in that house where everything reminds one of what is most painful, and to have poor Mrs. Daubeney’s pale, haggard, anxious face ; and still more, poor Mr. Daubeney’s look of bodily and mental suffering always before me, and to be able to do nothing—absolutely nothing—is more than can be endured.

“It has been a hard trial, and I find it is difficult to bear these trials ; I was formed for happiness, I am not constituted to exist in all this gloom and misery.

“Oh ! It *is* a wretched world.

“Well, these dear old people are gone to Ramsgate ; I am not ashamed to say that I feel it a great relief.

“A change!—any change—how I have longed for it!

“Well, I am come down here, then.

“Am I any better for it?

“Alas! I carry the barbed shaft within me like some poor stricken deer, and all places are much the same to me.

“The heat and the worry of London, and the presence of these poor old people, and the constant irritation of Valentine’s presence, seemed insupportable then; and now this quiet, and this sameness, and nothing to look upon but this water ebbing and flowing,—ebbing and flowing; and the heavy green of the trees, so black and monotonous; and the want of all objects, the vacancy, and the utter uselessness of my life, and the absence even of Valentine, from whom I wished to be absent

“It seems to me altogether as if I was more wretched than before.

“‘Oh, wretch that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?’

“‘Why?—why was I born? *Did I be-*

seech the Maker, from my clay, to frame me man?

“ Did I solicit thee, from darkness, to promote me?”

“ How often is that pathetic cry of the miserable Adam upon my lips!

“ I look around upon human life,—such as have seen it, and known it,—what a strange scene of purposeless confusion it seems to me! Why are people made with such a capacity for happiness as I had within me,—and why is that happiness for ever denied? Why are we such sinful, mistaken victims of our own passions, and the passions of others?—most helpless and most forsaken.

“ Does misery make people better?

“ I do not find it so. I am afraid I grow less and less amiable every day. I am so unhappy myself that I get absorbed in my own feelings; irritated against everything which adds to them; and not sufficiently compassionate to others, and I am sure not sufficiently gentle to them.

“ But this conviction does no good; it only

adds to other troubles,—it only increases that internal feeling of rebellion against suffering which is worse than useless,—mere gratuitous misery.”

Such as depicted in these manuscripts was, then, the state of this poor young creature’s heart, under the trying circumstances in which she was involved; deserted, as it were, in the world’s wilderness, without compass to direct or light to cheer.

But we now come to a new period in her moral life, and she shall describe the effect produced upon her plastic and docile character in her own words.

There has been a great effect produced upon me since I wrote the above wretched, querulous lines,—I am now ashamed to look upon them.

“ Perhaps, however, it is good to have experienced what we can do for ourselves, or we should never be fully aware of what has been done for us.

“ I do look back with shame upon what I was ; but that shame is mixed with a feeling of intense gratitude for what I am. Not, I fervently trust, a presumptuous confidence in what I am,—not in pride, God forbid it,—but in humble hope and belief that I am an altered and a better creature; in deep, heartfelt gratitude to Him who has thus arranged the moral life, and connected to much peace and strength, with faith and trust in Him.

“ But I will put down the history of this portion of my existence as things occurred,—trying to recall the impressions I received, and faintly to picture to myself the great, the vital change, which has been effected, and which it is my humble confidence will be for ever.

“ I was in a most restless, miserable humour, and did not know what to do with myself. . . .

“ It was upon a Sunday morning. The bells were ringing cheerfully; people were flocking through the fields, over which my window looks, all trooping to church. I had seated myself there after breakfast was over,

solitary and melancholy, for Valentine was not come home; he now often keeps away whole Sundays, as well as week-days, and how he spends those Sundays, who knows?

“ Well, I had sat down to that window in a most listless, melancholy humour, and I stayed there gazing vacantly into the garden. It was filled with roses and summer flowers, where the bees and flies were buzzing and humming,—and the little birds chirping and creeping about, and the sun shining upon the tops of the trees, and glittering upon the flowing river; and little boats skimming over the water, some with oars dashing in with such a pleasant sound, scattering showers of glittering drops as they rose and fell,—others, with tiny white sails, looked like sea-birds scudding before a sweet, fresh, morning breeze. Beyond the river stretched the fields, so richly hedged and wooded, so fertile and so rural.

“ But what was the beauty of such a scene to me ?

“ It struck upon my eye, but it was power-

less to the mind. It fell upon me like a mere painted shadow, which had neither life nor meaning.

“ Suddenly the bells began to ring for Church.

“ First Richmond Church seemed to open its voice, and its bells rang away merrily; it was answered by Twickenham; and then, for it was one of those soft, clear days, in which sound is carried to inconceivable distances, I heard one distant tower after another take up the sound, till the air was filled with their voices, ‘Belling men to Church,’ as Shakespeare says, justly considering it as among the most expressive tokens of civilization.

“ How sweetly the wild clang sounded upon my ear!

“ Presently, for my sitting-room is upon the first floor, and looks a long way over the fields,—I saw, as I said, the people flocking along; their many-coloured dresses giving such a pleasant animation to the picture.

“ Men and women, youths and maidens, little boys and little girls,—all dressed in

their neat Sunday clothes,—looking so trim and so happy.

“ And the bells kept ringing, ringing,—and calling, calling as it were, for every one to come and worship God,—the Author of all the delightful charms around, and of that most lovely country spread forth before us.

“ I felt sad, and ashamed to be left out.”

“ Valentine and I had got into a very careless way about attending public worship. I had never been brought up to habits of regularity in this respect ; and he, in the course of his young man’s life, had lost his.

“ His mother, good Mrs. Daubeney, used to be very particular, I believe, in making him go twice a-day when a child. She is a very excellent, pious woman, and most exact in fulfilling all her religious duties ; but there is a something slow about her, and she certainly has not the art of inspiring others with the sentiments she so severely professes herself.

"It is a pity. She is very excellent ; but she has a certain turn of mind and feeling which seems to make it impossible for her to coalesce exactly with any but those who think exactly as she does. Still less can she influence or act upon differing minds. She has a few particular friends of her own ; all very good sort of women, I dare say, but so impossible to get along with ; and when they speak upon things of this nature, doing it in such a disagreeable way, that I used to see plainly, even Mr. Daubeney himself shunned the subject when treated in this manner. And, as for Valentine, the manner in which he has unfortunately been brought up, and the efforts made by his well-meaning mother, have proved worse than useless ; and, I feel convinced, have tended to alienate him from the subject, rather than to form habits of serious regard to such things. It seems as if he now hardly ever thought about them. It is not that he is an atheist or an infidel in creed. Strange to say, he does not seem to reflect enough upon the subject even to *doubt*. But is he not in prac-

tice an infidel ? And as for me, what have I been better myself ?

“ I have never doubted that all I have been taught was true ; but, like Valentine, I fear it is because I have thought so little upon the subject, that I have not troubled myself to inquire. And I have believed all that I was told ; but with what effect—to what purpose ? How have I *lived* ?

“ In what absurd contradictions ?

“ Believing in the existence of the Infinite Power—never doubting my dependence upon that Power for everything I am or have ; and yet, with a folly and inconsistency which words cannot be found strong enough to designate, going on, as I have done, from day to day—building up one earthly idol after another, in which to seek for support and protection, and never once casting a thought upon or studying to obtain the favour and blessing of Him who made me, ‘in whom I live, and move, and have my being,’ and who ‘will never fail us or forsake us if we call upon Him,’ as the preacher said to-day.

“ Though I have been an irregular church-goer, I have still gone pretty often; but I have seldom profited by it. That must be my own fault, I know; and yet I cannot help believing, that if it had often been my good fortune to hear such sermons as the one I heard to-day, it would not have gone so badly with me as I fear it has done. The weekly hearing of discourses, which really would have opened my mind and led me to a more serious attention to these things, must have greatly helped in supplying the want of a more perfect religious education than the one I received—an assistance which I at last begin to feel that I so greatly need.

“ Feel, perhaps, for the first time in its full force to-day.

“ Yes, they were strange and new ideas that presented themselves to-day; my eyes seemed suddenly opened. It was as if a thick veil had fallen from before them, and everything appeared in a new aspect. Light appeared to dawn upon my soul, and gradually to dispel the dim, melancholy twilight in which I had

been groping—groping after this shadow and that, believing them to be substantial realities ; and finding, when I attained them, that they were but empty and profitless dreams.

“The preacher called. It was like the voice of one crying in the wilderness to me ; for, in what a wilderness of confused thoughts and feelings had my life till then been spent ?

“He called with that piercing voice of his, and in the words of Him, whom he commanded us to obey as his and our Shepherd, Master, and Lord, ‘Come unto me ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.’

“Rest !

“Ah, that was what I indeed yearned for !

“Blessed promise ! How had my soul wanted rest !

“How, ever since the days of my thoughtless childhood has my spirit been agitated and travailed, even in the hour of my brightest prosperity ; but how sorely has it been burdened and heavy-laden, since sorrow and terror came upon me ! Oh, how often and often have

I in anguish cried out, ‘ My burthen is greater than I can bear !’

“ I have felt so weak, so troubled, so miserably dissatisfied—looking forward with indescribable dread—backward with no comfort ; wandering, like Hagar in the Desert, where no water was to be found, and ready to cast this child of my fond hopes from my bosom, and say, ‘ Let us both die.’

“ Oh, who shall measure—who shall describe the despair of a helpless creature, when her earthly staff has failed her, and she has never looked beyond ?

“ It was in a distress of mind which I will not attempt to describe here, that after a sleepless night spent in wandering from room to room, seeking rest and finding none, not knowing where to turn for comfort, I sat down in a sort of sullen despair as I said, at that window, when the bells began to ring. Their voices seemed to enter my heart ; all the people were flocking to church, and I rose from a sudden impulse, and resolved to go too. Not that I hoped it would do me much good ;

but I felt impelled, I know not how, to throw myself upon my knees with my fellow-creatures in prayer. It was a vague desire, and with it was mingled a sort of indistinct self-blame that I had not done this so often as I ought to have done.

“I did not like to go to Richmond church. It is filled with smart-dressing people ; and there are such a crowd of carriages and fine-cockaded and powdered footmen to be seen at the door, that nothing could be more disagreeable to me in my then excited frame of mind. There had been a time when I liked all this show and bustle as well as anybody, but my heart sickened at the idea now.

“I knew of a little, quiet church a mile or two further off, Kingston way, in a retired part of the fields, and to it I resolved to go.

“I wished to go alone—I wished to be quite by myself, and to be quite unobserved ; so I put on a plain straw bonnet and a plain black scarf, and letting myself out by the garden-gate, got into the park lanes and fields

which led to the little place of worship which I intended to visit.

“ It was an obscure little place—humble, nay, mean in its appearance, as many might have thought who delight in highly adorned temples and elaborate services. For me, much as I am to seek, alas ! in matters of religion, I have never found what I wanted in such places. What I was searching for was truth and reality ; and these elaborate places seemed rather to rouse my imagination to the sense of the beautiful, than to awaken in me any more earnest and serious piety.

“ When the heart is filled with one simple, grand idea—impressed with the infinite majesty of God, how futile, vain, and insignificant does all earthly splendour appear !

“ The wise and mighty King seems to have felt this, when, after completing his magnificent temple, which rose in its silent majesty without sound of mallet or hammer, silent as a rising palm-tree, he exclaims, ‘ *Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot*

contain thee; how much less this house which I have made.'

"So I, unworthy as I am, have at least felt; and that all these, the proudest efforts of human devotional grandeur, were but as empty pretences and show, before the majestic simplicity of the reality.

"The shrine most worthy of Him, is that of a pure, fervent human heart, where he is worshipped in spirit and in truth. And, alas! where shall that shrine be found?

"How I wander!

"I seem to falter and hesitate before I enter upon the theme to me so awfully interesting, of this day's work upon my poor heart.

"The church was very ancient, built of heavy grey stones half-covered with ivy, low-roofed, and with a small square tower rising among the trees. It stood in a little secluded churchyard heaped with green mounds, and

studded with crumbling headstones, the simple monuments of the dead.

“The churchyard was surrounded by a few very old shrubberies, and on one side lay the garden of the little vicarage ; a humble mansion, but shaded with some magnificent limes, sycamores, and cedars, which threw large branches over the wall, and heavily shaded that side of the churchyard.

“On the south side was a row of very large and old horse and Spanish chestnuts, which almost excluded the sun, and threw their deep heavy black shadows upon the gravestones beneath.

“It is hard to believe that such sweet secluded spots as this can be found so near the vast city ; but so it is, and when I die, may it be my privilege to rest in such a place !

“Though I walked fast, the bells had done ringing some time before. I entered the church ; but I stole in as quietly as I could. They were all kneeling, and a voice, with most sweet and solemn tones, was reading the absolution prayer.

“ I went into an obscure corner by the door, and fell upon my knees with them all.

“ There was but a scanty congregation, and not one person of the higher class in it.

“ It consisted chiefly of old men dressed in the respectable dress of our peasantry,—and women of different ages. Of young men I was sorry to see few. There was a small number of neat little charity-school girls in one corner, and their white caps and tippets looked very cheerful and pretty.

“ Altogether, nothing could be more peaceful and soothing than the effect produced by this little simple unadorned place of worship ; set off alone by the deep and expressive tones which proceeded from the reading-desk.

“ The person who occupied it was a thin, tall, very delicate-looking man, who was reading the service in the most beautiful and deeply-earnest manner. His voice and pronunciation were those of a man of education, and his countenance refined and intellectual.

“ But there was nothing which would have struck me particularly about him but the deep

and most unaffected seriousness with which he performed the holy office that he was engaged in.

“ My thoughts were far too apt to wander,—little had I been accustomed to feel, as I ought to feel, the serious importance of that which I was about to do,—the solemn reality of addressing my Creator. Absorbed too often in my anxieties, my reflections carried away from the purpose in hand by any word which awakened associations,—the prayers that were muttered by my lips neither warmed my heart, nor soothed my spirits. But it was not so now.

“ Whether it was the peaceful quiet and seclusion of the scene—whether it was my previous frame of mind,—whether it was the touching voice of the reader, I know not, but I felt impelled to attention. And as the service proceeded, unaccustomed feelings seemed to gather round and give comfort to my heart. I rose from my knees and sat down to hear the sermon ; I must say better prepared to listen to the discourse than was usual with me, but

not expecting anything that would be very new, far less produce any change in my habitual ideas. But it was not so to be.

“The preacher went up into his little worm-eaten pulpit, and began,—and I listened, at first because I *would* listen. Soon, however, I was fascinated by the power of his words, and not to listen would have been impossible.

“His text was :—

‘Why will ye labour for that which is not bread?’

“There was something so seriously in earnest—so convinced of the vital importance of what he was about to deliver, in his manner, that my attention was, as I said, soon arrested, and I fixed my eyes upon him, and believe never once took them away whilst his discourse lasted.

“His face was not remarkable for beauty of any sort,—his features were ordinary,—his complexion sallow; but he had a very remarkable eye,—an eye that kindled, as he went on, into a brightness the most extraordinary, and the tender, serious expression of his face began

to change as he warmed with his subject into a glow of almost heavenly fervour.

‘How long will ye labour for that which is not bread?’

“The words seemed to go to my heart as if intended alone for me.

“He spoke of the emptiness, the unsatisfactoriness of a life founded alone upon the relations in which we stood to this world, and the inefficacy of pleasures which terminated here, to satisfy a spirit created for an hereafter. And he represented the powerlessness of those aids, drawn from considerations of this present life alone, to support and tranquillize the heart in its sufferings and its dangers.

“What a living picture was that he drew of a mind in this state! Its secret restlessness and disquiet,—its sense of the emptiness and hollowness of all things, as each was in succession called upon to afford that which never earthly thing yet afforded,—nourishment and strength to the spirit. How the interest in mere external things gradually subsided,—how fancy palled, and imagination wearied over the

repetition of the same vain pleasures, tending to no permanent end ; and how, in the hour of disappointment and sorrow, which must come, and did come to all, the best grounds for fortitude,—the best motives for calm and patient submission were wanting. All philosophy was cold,—all stoical indifference unsatisfactory.

“ It was as if he was telling the history of my own life. What a living picture he drew !

“ Why should I go on ?—why in feeble words endeavour to paint what many have so feelingly experienced ? I have not the powers of this preacher

“ He told us of that which was the true bread,—of fountains whence flowed living waters,—of our immortal relations,—our high destiny,—of our sonship and communion with the infinitely Good.

“ And then it was as if there was a noise of thunderings and mighty waters, and then a deep and awful silence in heaven ; and majestic and slow, the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing on his wings.

“ And behold it was light.

“ My sensations were too vivid for words.

“ How comes it that this is the first time in my life that a sense of these things was borne really and truly into my soul ?—that I was awakened as to a new existence, and saw things and myself as they really are ?

“ For the first time in my life felt truly,—really believed that I was an immortal creature, and that I was in the presence of the living God ?

“ Oh ! well might that preacher say, that it was in the real, personal acceptation of these two truths that the whole life of man consisted.

“ Well might he express his apprehensions, that of the thousands, nay millions, openly professing their belief in these truths, so few really and practically did believe them.

“ Well might he say that those promises which to so many had proved as nothing—those promises of real strength,—real help,—real support, were offered only,—could avail only to those who truly believed.

“ ‘ God forbid,’ said he, ‘ that I should judge

my fellow-men ; that I should affix limits to the mercy of God as regards any of his creatures ; that I should not trust and hope but that his infinite benevolence and pity will, in its own good time, find means to help those who wander in the darkness of ignorance or doubt : but what I mean to say, and what I do say, is, that those peculiar promises of which I speak—those promises of strength and assistance—are offered in the Scripture to those who believe, and to those who believe alone.

“ ‘ *Only believe: all things are possible to those who believe.*’

“ ‘ This,’ he went on to tell us, ‘ seems a hard saying to many ; they say belief is not in our own power—why are men to be punished for what they cannot help ? ’

“ ‘ Most true,’ he said ; ‘ belief is, in many cases, not in a man’s power ; for how shall he believe unless he has heard — how, unless the Gospel is preached to him ? But with this part of the subject *we* have nothing to do ; the circumstances of such are not our circum-

stances—their ignorance not our ignorance. These things are among the deep secrets of God. ‘*Lord, and what shall this man do? What is that to thee? Follow thou me.*’

“‘ Why Omnipotence suffers the contradiction of evil—why Infinite Benevolence permits suffering and sorrow—we must not ask; because to ask is only to bewilder ourselves in questions, impossible in the present state of things to answer, and which only minister to vain disputings.

“‘ The thing we do know, is the fact of the promise to those who *do* believe. And another thing we do know is, that though it may not always be within man’s power to obtain belief, nothing is so easy for him as to lose it when obtained.

“‘ And of those I address, how many are losing—have lost it—or are in the way to lose it, by their negligent indifference to this all-important subject—by their want of a diligent cultivation of those thoughts and feelings which teach them that they are immortal, and lead them to their Maker?’

"He then went on to show, how a real conviction of these great truths, almost by a law of our moral nature, produced the fulfilment of the promises attached to them.

"He put it to us all—and in such a way that he seemed, at least as far as I was concerned, to arouse a voice within me that answered to his appeal—whether, if we truly, sincerely, really believed that the soul was immortal—that this life was but the short rudimental preface to what was to follow, we could by possibility be occupied as the majority of men, unhappily for themselves, were, occupied with the inquiring how it was to be *enjoyed*, instead of how it was to be *improved*? He said the general recklessness and indifference upon this subject would be morally, he might almost say physically, impossible, if the case were so.

"'Conceive,' he said, 'of a man under sentence of death, whose deliverance from his doom might depend upon his employment of a few intervening days; and conceive this man, instead of being intent upon, and carefully per-

forming the task proposed as the means of his escape, should be going on dressing himself up as a *petit maître*, dancing away the time at a fancy-ball, or throwing himself upon his bed, and trying to drown thought, and sleep the hours away ; or anything equally absurd, — You would say the man was mad, or you would say he did *not* in fact believe that the execution of the sentence would and did depend upon the way this portion of his time was employed.'

" After this he proceeded to another part of his subject, and spoke of our sufferings, of our frettings, our agitations, our fears, our feebleness and want of power both in action and in endurance.

" And he put it to us again.

" ' Was it possible, was it to be credited, that we believed in the actual existence, the actual presence, of an everlasting, all-powerful, all-just, all-benevolent God, when we could thus impotently worry ourselves, and fret against the inevitable course of events ?'

" No, it was plain we believed no such thing.

“The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and full of mercy and truth, did not exist for us.

“Did we ever realize to ourselves this character of the all-powerful Being upon which everything we were and had depended ? Did we ever actually realize what infinite wisdom and power united to infinite goodness and mercy must be ? What an almighty and all-righteous *Father* must be ? What such a Being must necessarily be to his creatures—to his children ? And though sin, and death, and sorrow were in the world, ought we not, in common reason, to feel assured that there must be a benevolent purpose at the root of this capability of sin, of this dispensation of death and sorrow, and that the consummation of all things would reveal it ?

“‘If you do not believe that the Almighty is righteous, benevolent, and wise, say so at once. Don’t deceive yourselves—declare it —face the idea ; and you will soon see what a monstrous contradiction it involves : but I defy any of you to believe that.

“ ‘ But if you do profess to believe that which no rational being who believes in God at all can help believing, make yourselves feel that you believe it, act as if you believed it. Cast yourselves, cast yourselves upon God ; look up to him as to a father ; trust to him as to a father ; receive the cross of moral discipline from his hands, as you would from the hands of the wisest and tenderest of fathers—drink the appointed portion in patience and faith, and ye shall find it the healing of your souls.

“ ‘ Oh ! do this—do this ; don’t talk about it, but do it ; don’t pretend about it, but realize it ; don’t fancy it, but feel it.

“ ‘ The promise of the blessed Saviour shall be really and actually fulfilled in your lives : “ *If ye have faith but as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall move mountains.* ” ’

“ It was as if a mountain was heaved from my breast, an insupportable load. Father !

Oh, I knew what it was to have had a father !
My icy heart melted at the thought."

There was a break in the MS. here. It would seem that, absorbed by the new train of thoughts which had been awakened, and by the workings of the change effected in her character, Lilla had made less use than usual of her pen. It often happens so, I believe, that people who are very deeply moved by any circumstance, though they have been till then in the habit of recording their thoughts upon paper, find the means so inadequate and unsatisfactory, that they have not under such circumstances recourse to it.

So it seemed in this case. Many weeks, it would appear, had elapsed before Lilla took up her writing again ; and from that time, a change might be discerned even in the penning of the manuscript. There were no longer those passionate expressions of feeling, and there was no longer the rapid, hasty, dashing writing in which they had been set down.

There was an appearance of serenity, of temperance, of self-possession in the more even lines of the writing itself.

This history of a heart thus went on.

“That good man promised us that we should find a strange change take place in ourselves if we once experienced what it was really to believe in God.

“What he has said has been literally fulfilled, as far as I am concerned. I do not mean to say that I have not had many, many hours of misgivings and despondency, doubt and coldness ; but I am a new creature in spite of that.

“I was not contented—who would have been ?—with that one sermon. I was but too glad to put myself under this good man’s teaching. I have become a regular attendant at that little church ; and every time I have been there, have heard something or other which

has served to deepen the impression the first sermon had produced.

“ His discourses seemed to have for their especial object that which I so much wanted, namely, the establishment of habitual religion in the character. It would take much writing to put down a tenth part of all the wise and good things I have heard from him ; but as I have got my pen in my hand, I am tempted to put down some part of what he told us yesterday. He was discoursing upon the virtue and necessity of holding by our convictions.

“ He told us how many of us were guilty of the weakness of holding a truth by halves as it were ; and he enlarged upon the means to be employed for diligently cultivating and strengthening the truths we had received, till they became an habitual part of our minds.

He said that religious truth, being so entirely of a spiritual nature, and belonging to that portion of a man’s complex being, which may be called more especially his *own*, depended according to the laws instituted by the

Lord of that nature, more entirely essentially upon his own individual exertions, than any other faculty or endowment whatsoever.

“ Among other means of cultivating the growth of religion in the soul, he enlarged upon that of prayer.

“ He showed that the use of prayer was expressly commanded by our Divine Master, and that all the good things we had any right to hope to obtain, were made dependent upon it. Not that our Father in heaven did not know what we have need of before we ask him, but that any one who would examine into the nature of their own mind would find, what a wholesome nourishment this exercise afforded to the highest faculties of the spiritual man; how it brought us into an actual communion with the Great Idea! And he exhorted every one seriously desirous to obtain that blessing of blessings, a pure, serious, fervent sense of religious realities, to the careful practice of this duty.

“ This was quite a new view to me.

“ I had been accustomed to say my prayers,

as the term is, God knows with how little attention or care, as a sort of duty which it would be impiety to neglect, but with little further thought about it.

“ Now all this is changed ; it has become a matter of serious endeavour and importance, and I have found the fruit the good pastor promised from it ; my sense of the actual reality of religion, being very, very much strengthened.

“ I have lived so long in this sort of sleep of death, that I have not the benefit of a right *habit* of thought. It is, therefore, more difficult for me to attain that equality of religious feeling which my kind teacher insists upon so much—neither to be too hot nor too cold.

“ The one extreme he says succeeds the other. An equable, habitual, natural, quiet reliance, confidence, and sense of individual responsibility is what he would desire to see main-

tained in the soul. Time, he assures us, and perseverance will effect this, united to humble endeavour and prayer for help.

“ Ah, that perseverance ! It is, indeed, the crown and guardian of all the virtues, as he told us.

“ To humble perseverance, to a patient continuance in well-doing, the reward promised is great, even eternal life !

CHAPTER IV.

“ Not so art thou.—I thank thee, God, I refuge found
at last,
From Passion’s fiery impulses that scathed me as
they passed ;
The dried-up eye, the feverish pulse, is stilled, and
left behind
The resignation and the hope, the calm and equal
mind !”

READE, *Lines on Doubting Sheep-Slate.*

I FEAR to weary your patience with the detail of these secret aspirations of a soul, which had been left to itself for so many years, and was thus awakened to the perception of the higher and better life.

Some it will, I believe, deeply interest ; others will turn over the pages wearily, and exclaim at the tedium of the author.

I do not know how it will be.

The delineation of human passions, of their felicities, and their agonies is interesting to

every human being. Shall the endeavour to trace the means by which one young creature, deserted by all, without human help, and unprepared by careful education for the difficult part she had to play, surrounded, by circumstances, whose influences were so little calculated to arouse or improve her—the manner in which this young creature was awakened to a sense of better things, through the force of a few words in due season, be without their interest ? Shall a description of the power of those aids, which, according to the constitution of our moral being, “be they in the body or out of the body, we know not—God knoweth,”—those aids which assist sincere endeavour—be tedious ? Those aids by which a frame of mind was attained, which carried her triumphant through difficulties and sorrows, which might have overwhelmed many a stronger nature, and which it was her destiny to encounter alone !

I have given you the dawning of that light which diffused itself more and more into the perfect day ; and here I think I will stop, as far as the manuscript is concerned ; which Mr.

Craiglethorpe at length having finished, laid down with a heavy sigh.

This was then the angel whom he had driven from his side ; this the celestial companion that might have been his—shedding a pure and holy influence upon his dark and degenerate life. A life how dark, how vulgar, how degenerated ! How little better than mere animal !

For what is it but to be a mere animal to live only to heap up gold—occupying the mind with mere material interests, adding figure to figure,—casting up, deducting, subtracting, and for relaxation, being satisfied with the mere animal pleasures of every day.—To eat and sleep, and sleep and eat again.—Day following day, as that of the poor senseless brute does ; without connection, without progress, without result, except indeed so far as the coffers are concerned.

But was it all over ?

Was she gone ? Had she really left this earth, of which she was so bright an inhabitant ?

The lovely picture drawn by Mrs. Benfield, of her conduct in the Fleet, formed the corollary of the journal. It was the result of the change of mind and character, of which the first circumstances had been thus related in the manuscript. But what had become of her since?

She had vanished from the scene.

That pale, beautiful figure of patient, uncomplaining sorrow, leading her little boy by the hand, had vanished.

Penniless, friendless, without even the roof of a prison to shelter her—without the rough protection its walls afforded from the injuries of a bad and cruel world, she had gone forth.

Oh, that he had been there!

Oh, that his barbarous nature had been visited with only the commonest relentings of humanity, and that he had had the poor charity to inquire after the fate of that lovely and tender child of his friend!

But he was far away. Indifferent—or rather alienated and offended. And now his

fancy and his heart took a cruel revenge, and regrets the most poignant agonized him, and his pain was scarcely to be endured.

He had let the manuscript fall from his hand ; and still he sat there, his eyes fixed on vacancy—following that pale figure, the little boy in her hand, as she crossed the threshold of that gloomy prison.

He sees her going down a narrow street that leads to the Thames. He follows her. She is approaching the water's edge.

Is it possible ? Will all her sorrows end there ? What ! After all !

She is upon the edge—she looks into the dark depths below. She stretches out her arms ; one name—it is his ! escapes her lips.

And —

He starts with a loud cry from his chair, opens wide his eyes, as one suddenly roused from a horrid dream—staring wildly, as if following some spectre. Then he slowly recovers himself, falls back in his chair again, and says—

“ No—she would never do it.”

He was quite right in that conclusion, as every one who has followed the course of thought and change of character of which I have endeavoured to give some faint indications, must be aware. Religious submission—a patience built upon love and hope—a tranquil acquiescence in the Divine will, however signified—does not lead to rebellious suicide.

It was with a sense of holy tranquillity—that peace of God which indeed passes all understanding—that the pale and wasted mother, clasping in her hand the thin, fever-wasted fingers of her little boy—walked forth from that den of vice and misery where the once brilliant and admired Valentine had ended his earthly career.

She had suffered much by him—much in him.

His criminal indulgence of a fatal passion had worked the ruin of every one connected with him.

His father and mother had finally sank under the cruel sense of their son's ill conduct.

The business, which, like some flourishing tree, whose branches, filled with leaves, had afforded nourishment to numbers of happy creatures, had been brought to ruin ; and in its ruin had involved the fate of all. How wide spreading is the distress when such a house as that of Daubeney falls to the ground !

What bitter grief had Lilla felt in the knowledge of all this ! How had her heart bled for distress, which it was impossible for her to alleviate !

Valentine had taken this as he took the rest, with a sort of reckless indifference, which shocked her beyond measure, and gave her more pain than almost anything else.

Those are pregnant lines of Mr. Taylor, in his "Virgin Widow."

"But, oh ! beware of spendthrifts, as of men
That, seeming in their youth not worse than light,
Would end not so, but with the season change.
For time, she said, that makes the serious soft,
Turns *lightness* into *hardness*." ,

Such had been the case here.

"Well," said Valentine, sitting down in a

very small room in a pretty little retired villa, which he had taken upon the Surrey side of London—"this is not so bad, after all. Cheer up, Lilla ; don't look so woe-begone, child. Things are bad, but they might have been worse. What letter are you poring over there, with such a rueful visage ?"

"Never mind—don't ask me, Valentine. It's no use to vex yourself. I am glad you like this place. I am sure it's very pretty. I only wish—only wish"

"Well, what do you wish ? Nay, if we set to wishing, there is no end of what we may wish, you know."

"Well, my wishes," said she, trying to smile, "are of the sort one does get granted, even in this world. I was wishing for something less."

"That would be difficult to get, I should think, seeing that we are in a nutshell already."

"Ah ! but there are smaller nutshells than this—and when I think ——"

"Well, when you think. I wish to Heaven

you could help thinking. What's the use of thinking?" said he, with impatience. "If I once took to thinking, do you think I should not have a knife at my throat?"

Such expressions always distressed and frightened her exceedingly. She knew there was no use remonstrating, that it was vain to preach patience, far less to attempt to bring on reflection, and that repentance which might lead to renovation. Valentine's mind seemed quite incapable of, or obstinately determined against, serious thought. And if he were ever by the pressure of circumstances, brought to think seriously for a moment or two, it only ended in some desperate expression of this nature. It seemed as if endurance of pain was impossible to him. He must either shake it off, or end the paroxysm at once by a desperate resolution.

His usual resource was in a sort of thoughtless levity of spirits, which enabled him, as it seemed, to escape reflection either upon the past or the future. This was aided by a

moral insensibility which, in this case, was most dreadfully injurious.

The sufferings of all the inferior members of a great establishment like that of Mr. Daubeneys, when suddenly thrown out of employment ; of aged men unfitted for other occupation, who had been retained there in a sort of patriarchal charity, and of a variety of others more or less losers by the ruin of a great house of business, had grieved the heart of Lilla far more than her own.

She had made every effort in her power to relieve them, and her endeavours in their behalf had, in many instances, succeeded in lightening the misfortune to these innocent sufferers.

But I have not space to enlarge upon these instances of her goodness, nor upon the misery of that portion of her life which followed.

Personal misfortune itself,—the bitterest experience, is ineffectual to work any beneficial change upon a character like that of Valentine. You see him in a cottage in Surrey

now, but you already know how the history terminated.

And that Valentine Daubeney died in the Fleet.

And I return to Lilla, to relate what Mr. Craiglethorpe and Mrs. Benfield so vainly languished to know, namely, what became of her after she had crossed the threshold of the prison, and gone forth a houseless wanderer with her little boy in her hand.

CHAPTER V.

“If thou have loved, ‘not wisely but too well,’
If Fate have severed, or harsh words estranged;
If in thine ear still ring the last farewell,
And the whole face of earth to thee be changed,
Chain down the tempest in thy yearning heart.”

MRS. ACTON TINDAL, *The Pilgrim.*

MELTED to the heart by those feelings of tender compassion with which she had watched the rapid decline and death of her unfortunate husband ; every thought soothed and softened by the divine influence of that generous forgiveness which she had extended to his errors, and the patience with which she had submitted to her appointed trials ; Lilla, her delicate-looking boy in her hand, slowly walked away after the funeral was over.

What is she to do with herself now?

Never was creature in civilized country more desolate. She had neither relation, nor connection, friend, nor money, not even where to lay her head.

She had not a property in the world but her wedding-ring, a small locket which contained her father's hair, and the watch which he had given her. These three valuables she had retained in the midst of all her necessities, chiefly through sentiment; but the sentiment justified by reason, as she was thus left not entirely without resource.

The funeral was over; she had stood there with her little boy, with a face calm, patient, and tearless, and seen the plain pauper's coffin which enclosed what had been once so much beauty, spirit, and intelligence, lowered into the grave.

She had heard the earth rattle upon the lid, as dust was committed to dust, and ashes to ashes, "in the sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection," a hope she ventured to entertain even for him. For had he not

greatly suffered and deeply repented? and had not what expiation was in his power been made at last?

It was a grey misty morning, and the fog lay upon the streets, and gave a calm melancholy air to the scene, which accorded well with the tender gravity of her feelings, as, casting one look back upon the walls of the prison of which she was now for ever to take leave, she walked slowly down Fleet-street, making her way quietly and steadily.

She had had time enough during the last few weeks of Valentine's illness, when she became aware that its fatal termination was inevitable, to review her situation, and determine upon what course she should pursue. Destitute she was, utterly destitute as far as this world was concerned—destitute, but not forsaken. If she had neither friends nor means, was deserted by all, and steeped in poverty to the very lips, she was rich in faith. There was one unchanging friend upon whom she rested, and her heart was filled with confidence and courage. The worst that could

happen to her and to her poor little son, would be to die in each other's arms. If all the resources to which she looked with hope should fail her, there would be the parish workhouse to take them in, or the stones of the street, it was indifferent which, to die upon.

It would be but a few years sooner or later. Those who lie on beds of down curtained with crimson and purple, must all die—must all die alone, even though surrounded with friends—must go through the last dark hour unaided, except by His spirit, who would not forsake her in her solitude.

And then there was this boy, this child she held in her hand, this treasure so inestimably dear. Whilst she had him she had not only a source of interest, a motive for struggling on, but a source of the sweetest pleasure. She never looked upon him but with that delightful intensity of affection and admiration, of delight and interest, which renders such ties ineffably dear.

The boy was now about six years old.

He had been a most beautiful infant, full of intelligence and susceptibility, both strongly marked as his characteristics before he was eighteen months old.

As he grew older, every quality which can delight a mother seemed to develop itself spontaneously. A power of strong attachment, a most generous disposition, an intelligence almost powerfully bright, with an excessive susceptibility to external impressions either of pleasure and pain, which was almost alarmingly interesting.

He had entered the world at a time when his mother, weaned from the world and all its pomps and pleasures, and steadied by sorrow and anxiety, was well fitted to fix upon herself the strong loving attachment of this little child. From his birth they had been inseparable : she had lived in him and with him, and the boy had shared every vicissitude of her life ; from the measureless luxury in the midst of which he had been born, to the debtor's prison whither, she had followed his father. We have made a slight acquaint-

ance with him there, as he stood by her side holding the needles for his mother as she worked.

To be by her side, to assist her in any way his strength and years would permit, seemed to be his chief happiness. There was little of the playfulness of the child about him, and yet he seemed neither dull nor melancholy. Quiet and observing rather, his large, intelligent eyes fixed attentively upon objects, as if endeavouring to comprehend them in all their bearings.

He was a tall child for his age, rather too slender, his features regular, and his eyes remarkably fine. His hair, which his mother in the midst of all her occupations and pre-occupations could never bear to neglect, hung in large flowing curls over his little shirt collar.

That the young and deserted woman clung to this boy with a fondness passing the love of mothers, will surprise no one ; nor that her most interesting and cheering occupation during her dismal abode in the Fleet Prison

had been the cultivation of his mind. And her endeavours were ceaseless so to modify the circumstances around her, so to atone for all deficiencies by her own exertions, that the boy should neither be checked in his future development, nor made unhappy in the past by the strange companionship in which he lived.

She kept him constantly by her side—every day accompanied him in a walk outside the prison, and strove to amuse, occupy, and form his mind by every means in her power. To enliven his spirits had indeed been more than she could do. Young, merry companions of his own age were wanted for that ; but she did what she could, and she did much—the boy was serious, but not unhappy.

His love for his mother was more like a passion rather than an affection. He clung to her with a devotion, rare even at his generous, loving years ; and this ardent love sweetened everything, and rendered every privation and disappointment endurable.

And now she pressed his little hand, which squeezed hers, and they slowly walked down

Fleet-street together, upon that dull, sunless day.

They walked in silence a considerable time, for they had both been crying very much before they bade farewell to poor Valentine's grave.

The crowd rushed up one way, and the crowd hurried down the other,—the stream of human life flowed upon each side of them; but they seemed little to heed it. Mother and child pursued their way quietly along. They came to Charing-cross. Then the little boy began to lift up his head and look about him; and his eyes fell upon the statue and the open space, and he began to cheer up a little; and as his mother took the way to Spring Gardens, and they came to the end of New-street, and the cheering green of trees and gardens which he had not seen for a very long time, saluted him, his little heart began to feel lighter, and his tongue was unloosed, and he began his prattle with—

“Where are we going to, mamma?”

“Across the Park, my love.”

“ And where next?”

“ To a shop I happen to know.”

“ And then—?”

“ Then, I am going to look for a friend, Walter.”

So she turned towards the Birdcage Walk, at that time a monotonous mall between rows of sombre looking trees, and proceeded till she came to the turning into Pimlico.

“ Oh, mamma! don’t let us go into the nasty streets again; these trees are so pretty!”

“ My love, it is only for a short time. I have business to do in that little street, Walter. And after that I shall take you quite away from the town, I hope.”

The little boy made a joyful exclamation at this, and walked on by the side of his quiet and resolved mother, without speaking again.

She entered a little shop, in an obscure street, where sat a little, grey-haired old man, with spectacles on nose, surrounded with ticking clocks and watches of rather a common description. The watches were mostly silver

watches of all sorts, of old-fashioned shapes and sizes; and the clocks were in mahogany cases, without any of those elaborate ornaments with which time-keepers are most often, now-a-days, adorned.

The old man held a watch in his hand, which he was taking to pieces; he laid it down, however, as she entered, and saying, “What would you be pleased to want, ma’am?” rose, and offered her a chair.

She sat down upon it; for she was beginning to feel faint and exhausted, making, as she did so, room for her little boy to sit down by her. It was some little time before she seemed to have recovered herself sufficiently to speak, and it was then with an unsteady, faltering voice that she said—

“Joseph Wilkinson.”

“That is my name, ma’am,” said the man; “but you have the advantage of me.”

“It is not likely that you should remember me; for I must be sadly altered since you saw me last; but, perhaps, you have not altogether forgotten Mrs. Valentine Daubeney?”

“ Young Mrs. Daubeney ! No, bless her, that I have not, and never shall. But you, ma’am,—sure you can’t be her ?”

The young lady sighed slightly, and said—

“ Too true, Joseph,—I am that person who was once Mrs. Valentine Daubeney.”

“ Mercy upon us !” cried the old man, “ what a change ! but I heard things went worse and worse with Mr. Valentine,—worse and worse,—as it has done with most of us. Badly enough,—badly enough,—with all !”

“ Too true. It was a great ruin ; and yet, as I see you still here, I trust *you* have been able, in some degree, to keep your head above water. Is your cousin still living ?”

“ No, madam ; he is dead ;” and looking round upon his little dark shop,—“ he left me this business of his ; but some way or other I make but a poor hand of it, though I do my best, and manage to pick up enough to keep body and soul together ; by regulating and putting the men’s watches to rights, who work about here. He whose customers are only among the poor, is like

to be poor himself. I cannot make much of it."

"I am afraid not. But you manage to live; and that is what some of us, I fear, shall find a very difficult matter."

The old man looked at the speaker more attentively, at this remark. He seemed scanning the style of her dress and appearance. He looked grave and sorrowful when his examination was finished; shook his head; retired to his place behind the counter, took up his watch again, and said nothing.

She was, indeed, dressed in a manner which bespoke the extremest poverty. Her black gown could scarcely be called black, it was so worn and rusty, and though neatly put on, and carefully mended, was shabby to the last degree; her plain black bonnet was drawn over her face, and tied only with one small piece of black ribbon. Her little boy's dress was somewhat better; but it was only a second-hand suit, which she had procured for him in the prison; it was too short for him, every way, and the slender ankles and thin wrists,

with their small, delicate hands, protruded an inch or two.

And yet both mother and child had an air beyond decency, amounting, almost, to distinction, even in these humble garments.

“Can I be of any use to you, madam?” the old watch-maker broke silence by saying, “I should be very glad indeed if I could do anything for you or your’s. I am not going to forget that you felt for me in the midst of your own troubles; and when I was sick, and almost bed-ridden, thrown aside, as it were a piece of old, useless lumber, in the confusion of those terrible days, you did not forget that I had once been a valued servant of old Mr. Daubeney, though I was past work then.”

“I was very sorry for you, Joseph Wilkinson. It seemed to me that your fate was almost the hardest of any among us all.”

“O, yes, madam, I was worn out in the service of the house. I had been an old porter there; and many’s the cold, and wet, and weary walk I have been forced to go,

braving wind and weather, upon their business. Not that I complain of it; it *was* my calling.—I was there to do it; but not being a very strong man, at any time, leading this life of exposure did that sooner for me than it does for most, and I was a done-for old man, crippled with spasms and rheumatisms, before my time."

"Old Mr. Daubeney had been very kind to you."

"Indeed had he. That was a good man, and a kind master, if ever one there was. He paid his servants handsomely and well. From the head clerk to the boy who swept the floors—everybody shared in the prosperity of that house. It was natural, and could not be helped, that all should likewise share in the ruin of its fall."

"He was a good and generous man. It is your grandfather, Walter, that we are talking about—I have often told you of him."

"He was not only generous to those who served him, but he did more. He was not contented with paying them handsomely whilst

they could serve him ; he did more, far more —he *never* forsook an old servant ; those who were worn out in his service, as I was, never wanted a comfortable pillow for their old age.

“ On that miserable day,” Joseph Wilkinson went on, “ when the house stopped payment —shall I ever, ever forget it ?—No, nor you, nor any one else who had anything to do with it—what was to become of me ?—I was sure to be thrown aside as a useless piece of lumber, as I said—my very existence was in danger of being forgotten, amid the sufferings of so many others, much more important in the world than I—and worthy, excellent Mr. Daubeney, poor man, dying of a broken heart —that very day, and dead the very next day—and the wailings and lamentations over his ruin and over his death—who was likely to think of poor old Joseph ? But,” and his grey eye began to twinkle and to moisten, “ there was one in that dismal hour going about, like an angel of mercy, ministering to all the sufferers she could get near, and seeming quite to forget that she was a beggar herself, and that all her

luxury and grandeur were over. Is that your own little boy, Mrs. Valentine Daubeney?"

The answer was a gentle pressure to the heart of the young mother, who sat there already feeling a sense of consolation, like balm, healing the wounds of her bosom.

Yes, human life often and often anticipates the sentence of the day of judgment. Our faults and crimes start up, when years and years are gone by, in fearful retribution; and the bread that has been cast upon the waters returns to us again.

Was it not a great and real comfort, in this hour of destitution, to find a grateful remembrance of past services from the only human being to whom she felt she could apply? But was it not a far, far greater, in those days of utter distress, to have the memory of her generous sympathy with a poor, helpless, insignificant old creature thus brought back in-bright recollection?

She felt healed, warmed, comforted — stronger and better; and the deep depression visible upon her pale, determined countenance

gradually yielded to a glow of something like pleasure.

“Set him here on the counter, please, madam. He’s a little fellow, but he looks very ‘cute. Perhaps he’s old enough to understand something I may say.

“Look here, my little lad—that lady there’s your mother. She looks pale, and thin, and older a good deal now, than when I knew her before. She was then as beautiful and lively a black-eyed young lady as ever I beheld—eyes as black as sloes, as the old song says, they surely were. Everybody was very proud and very fond of her then.

“And,” continued he, looking up from the little boy’s face to Lilla’s, whilst he laid his dry, withered hand upon the child’s delicate fingers, “and I remember that day as if it were but yesterday. I sat crying in a corner of the servants’ hall. I had come for my week’s allowance—but, bless me, who was there to pay it to me? It was my daily bread; but it was not *that* I was thinking of—for was not the master above stairs on his death-bed? and

had not the house of Daubeney stopped payment?

"They jostled me about, and seemed to think the poor old whimpering fellow sadly in the way; and I was getting up to go, when down comes a beautiful young lady, in a white gown, flying about her like the robes of an angel in a picture, and shining hair drawn round her head quite plain, and her black eyes so full of anxiety; and 'I thought to find a fire here,' says she.

"'No, madam, there's no fire here.'

"'And who are you, pray?' she said, coming up to me so kindly; 'you look very far from well. Ah! it is old Joseph,' for she recollects me. 'Poor Joseph! I fear you will be a greater sufferer than almost any of us.'

"'It was my daily bread,' you may recollect, madam, that I said; 'but what mattered that in the distress of so many better and greater than I?'

"'I do not see why, on that account, your

sufferings will be less to yourself. Have you had your allowance paid?"

" 'I was just coming for it.'

" 'And you have not got it?'

" 'No,' I said.

" And out came your purse to pay it me. I would have refused; but you persisted, and forced me to take half, and that was all I would take. But that was not all.

" It was a kind deed to help the poor old man on that cruel day. But that was not all.

" Do you remember the day that beautiful young lady came to visit me in the comfortable little den I had made for myself. She was in deep, deep black then, and her cheeks were very pale, as they are now; and her beautiful black eyes, that used to be as bright as two stars, were all dimmed, I believe, with crying. She had not forgotten the poor old man."

" I was so glad in those days to find I could be of any use—so truly sorry for you all," said Lilla.

She felt a sort of modest shame at having her good deeds thus dwelt upon, sweet as the remembrance was; and she attempted to interrupt the narration.

But the old man was garrulous and fond of talking; and he had a very good and grateful heart, and loved to enlarge upon the benefits he had received.

So he would go on :—

“ I shall never forget your coming in that day. I had been sitting very forlorn, thinking what would become of me ; and resolved that I must sell most part of my scanty furniture, break up from this little comfortable place, and go to some poor lodging, there to live upon what the sale of my goods should bring me ; and when that was done, go and die in the workhouse, or starve in a jail . . . When in comes this angel again, like a heavenly messenger still, though robed in black as she was, and sorrowful as she looked.

“ ‘ How do you do to-day, Joseph Wilkinson ? ’ she began ; ‘ I have had so much to do that I could not possibly get to you sooner ;

but I have thought a great deal of you, though there were so many to think of, because I believe you are the oldest and most helpless of them all.

"I said, I did not know what in the world to do ; that I was at my wit's end ; that I must get what I could by the sale of my little belongings, and when that was done I must go to the workhouse, or starve in the streets. It was much one to me, I said, which I did, the thought of the workhouse made me so miserable."

"Is it so very, very bad a place ?" interrupted Lilla, anxiously ; "Must one be very, very wretched there ?"

"What can you expect, my dear lady, from those who are the chief inmates of such places ? Honest poverty seldom sinks so low, it is my belief. It is drunkenness, debauchery, idleness, and vice, which chiefly come there. Pretty company for an honest unfortunate old man to fall into !"

"But are there no distinctions ? Coarse bread, and scanty food, and mean clothing, I

could submit to ; but is one forced into such company as that ? My child !”

And she threw her arms round him as he sat upon the counter before her.

“ Why, as for the bread and meat,” replied the old man, “ it’s not to complain of. The bread is the best white bread, and the meat more than many an honest hard-working fellow can ever afford to his family ; but it’s the company. The wretched debasement of the company. Oh, madam, my heart was bleeding at the thought of that !”

“ Ah !” cried Lilla ; “ better feed the body more hardly, and make some provision for the wants of the soul. What ! all herd together ? No plan for separating the unfortunate from the bad !”

“ Oh, dear no, ma’am. They do it in prisons ; but do not think of doing it in the workhouse. They are all poor, suffering, ill-used men and women there,” replied Mr. Wilkinson, with bitter irony.

“ That I was not a miserable, wretched creature, breathing out my last breath within

the walls of that polluted place," he went on, "I owe to you. You, who troubled, and harassed, distressed, as I know you were at that time, found leisure to think, and to do for persons less to be pitied, perhaps, than yourself; and among others, for me. The pains you took to reconcile me with that cousin of mine, with whom there had been a quarrel for years and years, and to persuade him to take me into this very shop at a small salary, I shall never forget; nor how sweetly you talked of the blessed one, and what *He* did for us, and what He suffered for us; and how, when we had nothing to pay, He frankly forgave us all. And what could we do for Him in return?—little enough; but something. We could obey Him, and love, and forgive, and help, in our turn; and you asked him to love, and forgive, and help, his poor old relation. He was not a hard man, after all, as I found. I had nourished an enmity against him, and he against me for years; that's the way people do, till some blessed one comes in between them, and sets all to rights. Then they won-

der what they have been quarrelling about all this time. . . . Blessed are the peace makers."

"I was very glad to hear that the plan succeeded so well," said Lilla, who was now really beginning to get tired of the subject, and anxious to proceed to the business she came upon. "I am glad you found yourself so comfortable with your cousin ; he seemed to me to be a kind-hearted, reasonable man."

"And so he proved. Quite different from what I thought, or I should never have quarrelled with him. It's a pity people should mistake one another so, and"

"But I am come upon business to-day, Mr. Wilkinson," and taking out her watch, and looking at it for the last time, "It is already past two o'clock, and I have no time to lose."

"I beg your pardon, madam, I was always too fond of talking ; and somehow you, and the sight of that young gentleman set me off ; but pray what can I do for you ?"

"Tell me the value of this watch and this little gold locket ; lend a pound upon them, and get what you can for them."

"Ah, Mrs. Valentine!" and the old man looked compassionately into her face. "How! are you going to part with this watch, ma'am?"

"Why not with this watch, as well as with other things?"

"Because," looking at the watch, "I know this watch well of old. Don't you remember, my dear young lady, that by way of bringing a little custom to cousin's shop upon my part, to start me in his good opinion, as you thought, you brought us this very little watch to clean. A pretty trinket, madam, as ever hung by a lady's side; and whilst I was turning it about, and admiring it, you begged me to take great care of it; for, said you, it was given you by your father, and you loved it more than anything you possessed in the world—And now you are going to part with it?"

"Necessity has no law, Mr. Wilkinson."

"Necessity! So hard as this! Is it come to this?" muttered the old man.

"Ah, my dear young lady, how has it gone

with you since the last time you were so good as to visit this place ?”

“ Badly enough, badly enough, Joseph.”

“ Oh, me ! that I should have this to hear from you . . . And your dress . . . Excuse me, Mrs. Valentine, pray excuse me ; what is become of the young gentleman ?”

“ He died in much distress, and was buried this morning,” said Lilla, in a low, trembling voice ; “ and I and his little boy are cast upon the wide world, and this is all we have. But there is a God above, and He will not forsake those who put their trust in Him.”

The old man gazed at her with a sort of reverend affection, and said,—

“ I always thought there was an angel before me when you were there. But what do you mean to do, you beautiful young creature, in this wicked town, where so many—every day that rolls over our heads—perish, or far, far worse, through poverty and temptation ?”

“ Poor things ! But they have not a little child with them. Alas, for penury ! But for temptation ?—No, Joseph. We may perish

for want—that must be as God pleases. But I trust and feel sure He will not suffer me to fall into any grievous temptation. But will you advance me the pound?"

"And what will you do with it? Where will you go?"

"To some respectable lodging for the night, which you will perhaps be able to tell me of. To-morrow, I must think of what I can do to maintain this little boy and myself."

"An honest lodging-house, and for one night! Where must that be? I am afraid, coming on foot to"

"Dressed as I am, do you mean?" looking at her poor, shabby gown.

"To one of the hotels. . . ." He hesitated.

"Hotels! My dear Mr. Wilkinson, who ever thought of going to an hotel? The meanest roof, so it be an honest one, must suffice me, and shall suffice me; only tell me of such a place."

"Ah, dear me! That's a difficult matter for one night only, in this bad town. The lower houses of entertainment are most of

them dreadful places—not fit for you or the poor child. This is a poor, dark, little hole after all, ma'am."

"I don't know what you call poor and dark," said Lilla, looking round with a vacant air; for she felt struck down and appalled at this unanticipated difficulty in her very outset. The idea of there being any difficulty in getting a decent lodging for one night, had never presented itself to her mind. She knew how easily they were to be obtained for guineas; she forgot that shillings were such different things—She forgot the hideous gulph which separates great wealth and extreme poverty in large cities.

"I am afraid," began the old man, hesitating . . . "but if it is only for one night or so, you might, perhaps, do me the very, very great honour, to accept of a lodging for a few nights under my poor roof, until you can provide yourself better. I have two rooms beside this behind the shop—narrow, dark holes, little better than closets, but one of them has a bed in it; and if you would be so condescending

as to occupy it, the girl of the house would put on clean sheets, and make it as comfortable as she could."

The idea made the colour rise to the cheek of Lilla. Such an unexpected turn of fortune! —such a blessed relief! Security, at least for the moment, when, bewildered by the difficulties Joseph Wilkinson had presented, she was just in despair what to do.

She clasped her hands, and said,—

"Oh, thank you, thank you; anywhere—on the floor, anyhow—Gladly, thankfully; but I must not and will not take your bed."

"Won't you? And who is it that found for me a place to lay my head, when all the rest of the world forgot me? No, dear, dear young lady; if it is any comfort to you, heaven be praised for it! But now, pray step in, for this is a sad place for you to be sitting in, and people may be coming about. It's rather dark," said he, as he opened the door into a very small room, about nine feet by seven; with a little, close window that would not open, and which looked out upon a dead wall

behind,—“it’s rather dark, I’m afraid ; but one gets used to it ; and I find I can see there almost as well as in the front shop, when my eye has got a little accustomed.”

He made way for her to pass as he said this ; and she, lifting her boy from the counter, and leading him by the hand, went in.

The poor little boy said nothing, but looked round in a wistful, sorrowful manner at this gloomy little cell, in which there was not one single object to be discovered which could please his childish fancy.

To the child it seemed gloomy as an ogre’s cave ; to his mother it was shelter, protection, safety for them both ; and she sat down upon a hard, wooden chair, with a feeling of rest and comfort, which she had not known for many and many a day.

“ It’s dark, but it’s quiet,” the old man went on ; “ and I sometimes think in this great, noisy town, quiet is worth more than almost anything. And now, will you please to excuse me, ma’am, and sit down and rest here whilst I go out upon a little business ?”

And he went out, shutting the door after him.

The poor little boy crept close to his mother's side, and sighed heavily.

"What is the matter, my darling—my own Walter? Are you tired and hungry, my dearest?"

"No, not hungry; but I don't like being here. Let us go away, mamma, now that man is gone."

"But he asked us to stay till he came back; and he's such a kind old man!"

"I don't know that; he's so very ugly."

"Oh, Walter! how can you be so foolish?"

"I want to go—I want to be among those pretty trees again. It was so fine there. I can't breathe in this nasty hole; and how it smells? It does so smell."

She had not observed that till now. She got up from her chair, went to the little window, and tried to open it. It was not only fast closed, but listed down, so as not to admit the slightest breath of air which might pene-

trate between it and the house behind it, which was only distant a few feet.

“The window won’t open,” said she, after many fruitless efforts.

“May I open the door, mamma? It is so dull and nasty, I can’t bear it.”

“Oh, Walter! Can’t bear it! Don’t use that naughty expression. You know it’s very naughty, my child. We *must* bear it. We must bear whatever it pleases God to send.”

“It’s very cruel to send me here,” cried the child, looking dolefully round, and bursting into a flood of tears.

“Oh, my boy, my boy! Don’t, don’t—be a good boy,” said the poor mother.

She was in great distress. It was the first time the poor child had pained her by any impatience. But the room even in the Fleet prison, poor as it was, was airy and lightsome compared to this dark den. The child was tired with his walk, and still more with his long, patient silence whilst his mother and Mr. Wilkinson were talking of things he did not understand. He was so glad when a move

was made, and he was released from his place on the counter. He got down cheerfully, in the hope he was again going into the fresh air, and to see green trees. To be ushered into this dark, dull, ill-smelling little place, was too bitter a disappointment for the philosophy and virtue of six years old.

Children are excessively susceptible of external disagreeableness of this sort. Darkness, dulness, want of objects to amuse their attention ; and above all, villainous smells are insupportable to children who have not been accustomed to them, till all sense of delicacy and decency is lost.

He looked round so wofully in the midst of his tears, that it broke the poor young mother's heart to look at him But what could she do but throw her arms round him, and beg of him not to cry for her sake ? It made her so wretched to hear him cry.

“ I won’t—I won’t,” sobbed the child ; “ I’ll be good—I’ll be good ; but pray give me a drop of water, for I am *so* thirsty.”

“Stay, dear—stay, dear ; that good man will be coming again soon.

“Stay, I hear him, I’ll ask him for some water, and then I’ll go out and buy my Walter a cake.

“Ah ! here he comes.”

The door opened, and old Joseph appeared.

He came in with a smiling happy face, a basket in his hand, and he said cheerfully :—

“What ! my little man, has he been crying ? I hope he’s hungry though, for I’ve got something good for him in my basket.”

Now, before we open good Joseph’s basket, be it known to you that he was excessively poor himself. His business brought him in scanty support to keep body and soul, as the saying is, together ; but too proud and too happy at the idea of entertaining his benefactress, this loved and beauteous being, whom he almost worshipped, under his roof, he never thought of consequences. He had emptied his little till, and gone out and bought what he thought most delicious to make his guests a dinner.

The basket was set upon the ground ; the little boy's eyes sparkled, not so much at the idea of a meal, as of an object of interest and curiosity. Children are at least as greedy for their minds as for their bodies.

The mother smiled because the child was happy. Joseph said :—

“ Come, my little gentleman, we must be busy and get ready mamma's dinner. Please to come and see what we have got here.”

CHAPTER VI.

“Who say, not all the wealth of earth
Can happiness impart ?
Alas ! how little do they know
How want can break a heart.”

W. C. BENNETT.

BEFORE we open the basket which, the kind-hearted and most grateful old man came tottering with into the room—for it was pretty heavy, and he was very weak ; and before we sympathize with the joy of the poor mother, as she saw her little boy’s eyes sparkle with delight at the sight of a basket about to be opened ; let us pause and reflect a little upon the course of these things.

On one side is a man rich and powerful,

abounding in this world's goods, but "let alone;" abandoned to the pride and hardness of his own heart; living from day to day that life of secret dissatisfaction and outward prosperity—of apparent cheerfulness, and inward gloom, which those live who live for themselves alone. Endowed with those blessings in profusion with which the Almighty has cheered his creation; but wanting that crown of all his blessings—love.

Here was Mr. Craiglethorpe living for the gratification of the baser part of his nature; a nature which had a tendency, and a strong tendency for far higher things, and this because he had wanted those graces of the soul, the seeds of which are laid deeply in the souls of most men. But these graces are like the fine productions of vegetable life, whose flowers, leaves, and fruits, and mode of growth, has furnished forth—nay, almost seem created to furnish forth, a type of the spiritual growth within the man. The fine productions of the vegetable world, be they for use or for beauty, require sedulous care for their due

development, and so do the fruits of the spirit.

Most certainly briars and weeds will grow up in the sluggard's unheeded garden, be it the visible or the spiritual. Most sure the goodly and beautiful, amid the trees and herbs of that garden, will gradually degenerate, till they finally perish and disappear amid the rampant weeds of wild, uncultivated nature, unless the hand of industry and attention be there.

Mr. Craiglethorpe had suffered the baser part of *his* nature to triumph over the better; and what was his reward?

He had generosity—he had sympathy—he had a power of tender, disinterested feeling—most of all, he had a power of pure, devoted love; but, alas! for him, he had also great pride, considerable obstinacy and hardness, and an habitual and almost cynical indifference to the good and happiness of others.

He had lived long in the world, and surveyed it with the eye of the intellect alone—had penetrated into its recesses, and, with a

quick perception, seen through its disguises. He had detected the hollowness and the selfishness which fair appearances too often concealed—the base contrivances of self-interest—the pride and self-seeking which lurked under the cloak of charity—the worthless ambition disguised by the fine phrases of philanthropy.

He had detected it all, and he held his race in that sort of derisive contempt, which is almost the certain precursor of a state of heartless and habitual selfishness.

What he wanted was *Charity*—in other words, Christian Love.

The divine influence, which pervades the universe of the great God, and which He, who was all love, all pure, disinterested, tender, pitying love, came down from the heaven of heavens, in the fulness of time to display, in its full extent, to mankind !

Love—love to God, and love to man.

Oh! pregnant idea, including all.

Peace, goodness, duty, piety, sweet swellings of gratitude, tender meltings of com-

passion, warm sympathies, exquisite delights, the felicity of the blessed even here!

Had Mr. Craiglethorpe cherished this good spirit within his heart, instead of suffering it gradually to expire, smothered under other things—had he read mankind, not only by the cold light of his intellect, but through the tender sympathies of the heart—he would have felt for them what we are at this moment feeling for him.

That, in the midst of their faults, their follies, their meannesses, and their crimes, there exists a latent better nature—that there are two sides in all mortal things—that the strife between the worse and better angel goes on in every man—and that in every brother of this fallen family, be he who he may, or bad as he may, there exists much to pity, and something to love.

Whilst writing this sentence, I think of Robespierre, and Thomas Paine, and the captains of slave-ships, and I am tempted to limit the sentence by an *almost*; but, perhaps, if we read the history of the worst of men,

we might find room for deep compassion, if it were in such cases impossible to find it for love.

If Mr. Craiglethorpe had nourished this charity, this divine spirit of love, had cultivated the better feelings of his heart, instead of rejoicing in the power and clearness of his head—if he had taught himself to grieve over, instead of regarding with a sort of malicious triumphant contempt, the errors, follies, and meannesses, in the detection of which his soul rejoiced, it would have been impossible for him to have become what he had become.

If he would have forgiven Valentine and Lilla his imagined injuries, whilst he pictured them to himself surrounded with prosperity, he would not have lost sight of them in adversity. If he had stepped forward, like a good and feeling man, to offer what aid and counsel were in his power, when he knew, must have known, that in such a catastrophe they must be greatly wanted, they would not have disappeared, as they finally had done, from the circle of his life. He might have had the

supreme, the exquisite joy, to a nature not ungenerous, of returning good for evil—the sweet pleasure of fostering and protecting the being he so idolized—and the still higher one of rescuing one fellow creature from misery, and assuring existence, progress, and development to another.

But he let the occasion pass.

The good he might have done he neglected to do, and the noble task was taken from him, and consigned to weaker and humbler hands.

The poor watchmaker was honoured with the post of benefactor. This rich and powerful Mr. Craiglethorpe was left to the grovelling pursuit of heaping useless thousands on thousands, to the pleasure of good dinners, and to the friendship of a man like Mr. Wilmington.

But the black eyes of the little boy, like those of a sharp mouse, are looking with curiosity at the unopened basket all this time; and the black eyes of the mother are watching

his, with a pleasure that almost amounts to amusement. With some ceremony, with some little air of importance, and with much of business, the good old man placed it on the floor, and began to lift up the lid.

There was a covered dish, and there were tarts and cakes, and there was fruit, and there were nice cool lettuces—lettuces which are cooler and sweeter to the fevered London palate than all the fruits and flowers of the garden.

The old man takes out a gooseberry tart, and gives it to the little prying boy, and bids him eat that to stay his stomach till dinner is ready. And the little boy eagerly digs his teeth into it, then recollects himself, bites off the piece, and offers the rest in haste to his mother.

“That’s my good little boy,” said Joseph; “mamma first. I beg your pardon, madam, for seeming to forget you; but the child seemed so hungry.”

Lilla smiled. Forget the mother whilst you are feeding the child! That seemed a

strange expression to use—to call it forgetfulness, when it was far more refreshing than to have fed herself.

“Oh! thank you, Joseph—the poor thing is hungry; and, besides, he never gets a little dainty. Thank you—no dear,” as the boy kept pressing it upon her, and she not even looking at it; “eat it yourself. I would rather not, thank you, my darling.”

And the child obeyed, and eat that tart, and another, and another, for Joseph kept feeding him as he continued his operations; and much the child enjoyed the dainties which he had never been accustomed to, and which, alas! would not have been dainties to most.

The pastry of such shops as Joseph Wilkinson was accustomed to get his good things from was, indeed, as if it had been made of iron, as some might say—I say clay.

It is a disgrace to a nation, one might almost say, if it did not seem a ridiculous exaggeration upon such a subject, the state of our progress in these minor matters—important, because they have to do with the

health of those to whom health is the indispensable blessing. Let any one look into the inferior shops where confectionery is sold, in obscure back streets in London—the horrible sugar-plums of sweetened chalk, coloured with poisons; the heavy black clay tarts, rendered tempting to childhood by gooseberries and plums.

Need has the poor man's child of the stomach of an ostrich to digest such things; and though the poor man's child, thank God, is often provided with a most extraordinary accommodation of power in this respect, yet many among them are as delicate as their betters, and woe to them, poor things, when these unwholesome dainties are put as treats into their little mouths.

The pale, puffed cheeks, the scrofulous swellings, the enlarged stomachs, and the shrunken limbs of these little ones, often arises not so much from want of food, or want of air, as from unwholesome food and poisonous dainties.

Lilla, absorbed in her own thoughts, gave

no attention to what was going on, and the little boy gorged himself to satiety. He was not nice, poor fellow ; anything the least like a tart was a great treat to him.

Now the old man opens a drawer, and takes out a clean table-cloth, somewhat the worse for wear, and spreads it upon the table, and then produces his covered dish, and sets it at the top, and a plate, heaped with the remaining gooseberry pies, at the bottom ; and upon an old-fashioned dish, that had once been dark blue Nankin china, now sadly cracked and *félée*, his fine lettuces ; and upon another a slice of cheese ; and a loaf of best white bread in the middle of the table. After this, he takes a bottle out of the basket, and draws the cork, and pours out a glass of white wine, fined with arsenic or white lead, I know not which, as was the custom then—not so, I trust, now ; and he says, his whole old face lighted up with hospitable triumph and pleasure :

“ If you please, ma’am, dinner is ready ; and

would you not like to begin with a glass of wine?"

"No, thank you, Mr. Wilkinson," putting it aside a little.

"Then the little gentleman, madam,—come, my dear, it won't hurt you."

"Oh, oh! no! thank you—dear child, what are you doing?"

"What! not a glass of wine, ma'am; pray let him have it—it can't hurt him. Just one glass—pray, madam."

For Joseph belonged to those days when to give wine was the greatest proof of hospitality and respect the poor man could offer to a superior; and to give money for drink the form in which every superior extended his little acknowledgment to an inferior.

To give drink seemed to be the most acceptable benefit any one could bestow; and men got into the habit of believing that to use money to obtain drink, was the most pleasurable use that could be made of it. To give Mrs. Valentine Daubeney a glass of wine, was

the height of Joseph's hospitality. To procure it he had paid a seven shillings which, in the general destitution, might have sufficed for many necessary things, and had bought, under the name of "Particular Madeira" from a neighbouring tavern, some of the execrable mixture at that time sold under such fine names.

Having rejected this cordial, offered with so much good will as a preliminary to his feast, Lilla now drew her chair, not unwillingly, to the table ; for a savoury smell proceeded from the covered dish, and the little boy was sitting upon his chair, beating his little legs up and down, and settling himself in his seat in that peculiar way children have, which expresses that they are excessively happy.

The cover is removed, and the eye of both mother, child, and giver of the feast rejoiced, when a fine large roasted fowl, garnished round with new potatoes, and swimming in a somewhat greasy gravy, presented itself.

"I forgot the bread sauce, I declare," cries Joseph.

"Oh! never mind, never mind," answers the mother.

"Will you let me carve it, ma'am, and save you the trouble;" and Joseph begins with an old-fashioned knife, not over sharp, assisted by a two-pronged iron fork, to *adjust* the fowl.

He set to the task with right good will, and worked with might and main. It was not often that Joseph had to dissect roast fowls; such things were rare in his gastronomic history. He set to it with as much vigour as if he were about to carve an Emu, and well he might, for it was almost as hard.

Good man, he did not know, as he pulled and hacked, reddening and panting in the attempt to sever a wing, that fowls were not always endued with sinews of such strength; and having at last completed the mighty task; the spoils of his victory over this cock of half-a-dozen years old, were laid with much satisfaction upon Lilla's plate.

A slice from the breast was more easily cut off for the little boy, and though it was all inlaid with the white gristle resulting from a

long life of warfare against the chanticleers, his fellows in the poultry-yard, it was all one to the child, who devoured it greedily, with plenty of potatoes, lettuce, and other things. His mother was not upon her guard. There had been lately so much difficulty to provide enough ; so little necessity to guard against excess, that, absent and preoccupied, she never observed what was going on, and endeavoured to eat her own portion as well as she could, thanking Mr. Wilkinson most sweetly all the time for the kindness of his attentions ; and striving to show her gratitude by appearing to enjoy his little treat.

But that was rather a difficult task. Her appetite had not revived ; her spirits were still too much saddened and depressed by the melancholy duties of the morning. She felt it almost impossible to eat. The wretched monster of a fowl smelt villainously of the stable-yard ; the delicacy which had cost poor Joseph half a week's expenditure at one blow was hardly wholesome—scarcely eatable food.

“ You don’t seem to relish your food, madam,” said Joseph, disappointed.

“ Oh yes ! I do. Oh yes ! I should do—any other day, dear Mr. Wilkinson ; but this day—indeed, I am not very hungry”—turning pale, and laying down her knife and fork.

“ I understand—indeed I understand ;—perhaps you’ll fancy a little at supper. We’ll put the rest by for supper,” said Joseph, who had dined himself upon a huge leg, than which I defy that of the river-horse to be tougher.

“ Taste a tart, ma’am, pray do. They’re full of fruit, and the juice, you see, runs over.”

She complied, but was horror-struck when she cut it open, at the nature of the pastry her little boy had been devouring with such gusto.

“ No more, pray no more, dear Mr. Wilkinson. Walter, my love, no more—you have had enough.”

“ A glass of wine—now do, ma’am ; I see you have no appetite ; a bit of bread and a glass of wine.”

She consented at first, for she felt faint and

low ; she took a bit of bread ; bread, shame be it said, little better than the rest of the fare--adulterated like the other things. She swallowed a glass of wine hastily, and without reflection.

It felt to her like liquid fire.

And the worst was that before she was aware, —honest Wilkinson had filled out a bumper, given it to the little boy, told him to drink it down, and it had been swallowed.

The consequences were such as might have been expected.

And such then was this repast, so kindly planned, provided with so much liberality and good will, so much needed and so hospitably bestowed! Converted by the rascality of those who sold and the mistaken notions upon one subject of him who gave, into poison. And thus it became the heaviest misfortune which could have befallen the hapless Lilla.

Ill and disordered she felt herself, by the poisonous stuff she had carelessly swallowed, unaccustomed as she was to take wine at all, but upon the delicate child, habituated to the

utmost temperance in diet, and yet who, through the cares of his mother had always fed upon wholesome food, the ill effects soon began to display themselves.

That which, if wholesome in itself, however excessive in quantity, would, under the wonderful power of assimilation which belongs to a young growing creature, have speedily passed away,—became heavy, poisonous, and indigestible as it was, a load which the stomach of a porter would have found it hard to dissipate. The poor child grew pale, his head felt insupportably heavy ; he slid down from his chair, came and rested his cheek upon the lap of his mother, and the little hand she took burned already with a beginning fever.

Poor Joseph!—Was it not hard upon him ?

“ What’s the matter, my boy ?”

The child groaned and sighed.

“ What is the matter, love ?”

“ What is the matter, little master,” said Joseph, looking tenderly at him.

The child complained of sickness, and an insupportable weight.

“Something has disagreed with him.—What *could* it be?—Dear me, how sad!” cried poor Joseph, quite bewildered, as the mother took the boy upon her lap, and looked anxiously at him.

He leant his head upon her breast,—he was too much oppressed to be able to lift it up.

“Good heavens! He is getting very ill!” cried she, in much distress.

“Bless us!—What *is* the matter?—What shall we do?” reiterated the poor old man.

The little hands began to drop and grow rigid,—the eyes to roll ominously,—the balls to turn upwards.

She had little nursery experience,—she knew not what these symptoms portended. As for the old man, he knew no more about children of that age, than if he had been a child of six years old himself.

“He’s going to die!—He’s going to die!” she cried, as the convulsion began in all its terrors.—“My God!—My God!—My child!—My child!—Oh! run for a doctor,—run for a doctor, dear Joseph Wilkinson,—the

nearest! — the nearest! — for the love of heaven!"

He was as much terrified as she was,—so frightened, poor old fellow, he could hardly get along, but he hurried out, and returned with the first man on whose door-plate the name of Dr. was to be seen. The medical man was happily at home, and he hastened to the assistance of the agonized young mother.

The child did *not* die.

As I think I have observed before, however in fictions we may heap distress upon distress, the experience of almost every one will show them, that it rarely happens so in actual human life. That hidden mysterious connection which enchains events, every one, I believe, will, from their own secret history, acknowledge to be directed in a different manner. It is a rare exception to the general rule in actual human affairs, when some alleviation, something in the shape of a compensation, does not arise, amid the severest and, apparently, most heavily accumulated trials.

The child did not die, and probably this

proof of the delicacy and susceptibility of his constitution, though it added greatly to the present difficulties of the poor young mother, by putting her upon her guard, inexperienced as she was, proved the means of preserving this treasure of her life.

The child recovered from the fit under the assiduous care of the doctor, who was a kind and skilful man, practising among obscure and poor people ; but an infantine fever ensued, the consequence of poor Joseph's food. They who have attended children through this painful and tedious disease, know how much both child and parent have to go through, before the victory is obtained ; and, when obtained, how feeble, delicate, and emaciated the poor little sufferer comes out from the struggle, and for some time remains.

The poor mother too !

“ The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak,” and they whose task it is to display the

triumphs of faith, the sure and certain support which those who cast themselves upon God shall receive in their hour of need, must not draw a visionary picture, or from the desire to enhance the victories of religion, disguise the truth of things.

Men are not to expect in their own case, far less trust that it will be the case with others, that the utmost piety, the most fervent faith, the most perfect submission, can preserve at all times, and in all trials, from very bitter, bitter suffering.

Things in this world are not so done. Great assistance, great supports, great consolations, undoubtedly *are* received; but miracles are not worked. Much is still left to the power of natural love, to the influences of others, to the workings of our own minds. We must not expect too much, or we shall be disappointed and discouraged, and “faint when we are rebuked of Him.” The deepest sense of religion will not act as does a charm,—will not destroy the evil, but aid in the contest with it.

If we are unkind, and negligent, and hard-

hearted to others,—if we abandon them to the extremes of distress, heartlessly, indifferently, carelessly,—they *will* suffer.

Mentally and bodily they *will* suffer.

There is a God above all, praised be His holy name! There is a Providence which rules the issues of things. He is not insensible of our wants though others are—He feeds the sparrows and counts the hairs of the head.

But the law He has ordained in this world appears to be, that the course of causes and their consequences must go on. That evil must produce evil, and good, good. That if we abandon the poor helpless sufferer, he must suffer. That if we pass by on the other side, the wounded traveller will die.

That if a Craiglethorpe forgets the daughter of his friend in the day of her adversity, and abandons a delicate creature and a delicate child to the rude charities of such an hospitality as that extended to them by poor dear Joseph Wilkinson, evil is done, good is left undone. Sickness and privation will produce their results, though the heart be steadied

upon God, and finds Him a sure help in time of trouble.

Had it not been for such help, do you think this child of luxury and refinement, this beautiful creature, so delicate, so sensitive, so finely compacted, body and soul, could have gone through what she did go through, and as she did go through it ? Be assured she could not.

But heavy upon the soul of those who might alleviate and do not, shall lie the weight of cruel struggles which might have been prevented.

Those two little dark close back rooms, too. That stifling air. The incessant noise of other lodgers going in and coming out ; those creaking stairs, separated from the bed's head only by a poor thin wall ! Those heavy thick-soled boots, going up and down, up and down, as it would seem unceasingly. Those cross-grained, ill-conditioned children over head, flinging

down chairs, jumping or fighting, startling the poor, trembling child from an uneasy slumber, over which the wretched mother watched with an anxiety which would scarcely allow her to breathe! That tattling, tiresome gossip who lived in the next room, always chatting and laughing with her opposite neighbour! Oh, that laugh! when the poor child seemed in the last agony.

The almost insurmountable difficulty of getting tolerable food. The villainous inferior medicines which the little chemist sent in. Her own aching limbs—weary eyes—sleepless nights—fainting spirits—and sinking heart! The struggles with herself to be patient—to be confiding—to trust in God through these fearful hours.

True, Mr. Craiglethorpe, you did not know, and you never will know in this world, what was suffered, for want of that care which you might and ought to have bestowed. But who shall say? In the next world may it not be one of our fearful experiences of that punishment which we trust may finally be purifying,

to learn what we might have done, and the consequences of having neglected to do it? The consequences that might have resulted from energy and benevolence, and that did result from heartless carelessness and inattention!

Slowly, slowly passed the hours, heavily counted, as the clock on a neighbouring church-tower rang them out.

The darkness of these two little rooms in the present state of her spirits felt almost insupportable to Lilla, and the sensitive child languished for light and air.

Poor Joseph!

He did what he could. Never was man so kind as he; but it was but a blind kindness at the best. He had been himself so inured to this mode of life that he had no perception of what was wanting. Happy dispensation of things which so habituates us to the circumstances by which we are surrounded! So that we may hope that men are less unhappy than we imagine them, under privations that we should perish if called upon to endure.

A dangerous consolation to indulge in, perhaps you will say, but if true, an assistance in the endeavour to reconcile the mystery of this dispensation of wants with a Giver all benevolent and all powerful.

At last, however, matters began to grow so urgent, the health of the mother was evidently giving way so rapidly,—the recovery of the child was so lingering, that the doctor was obliged to speak out, and pronounce upon the absolute necessity of a change.

When he called one day, he found Lilla, her head bound round with a handkerchief, to allay, if possible, the painful throbings of her temples. She looked pale and haggard, whilst the boy, once so beautiful, but now no better than a withered skeleton, was lying moaning upon her lap.

The good man looked at the picture with sorrowful compassion. Custom had not hardened his heart to scenes of misery. His sympathies had enlarged as his practice had extended. The constant habit of endeavouring to minister relief to every form of sorrow

which met his eye in his professional career, had raised up a divine counter-habit, which had saved him from that fatal and hardening effect of handling holy things, be they objects of piety or of compassion.

Beautiful she looked in her patient suffering ! So calm, yet so melancholy ! But it was evident her own strength and spirits were rapidly giving way.

She was indeed anticipating her own death as well as that of her child ; looking calmly forward to the close of her hapless career. She had one only anxiety, which was, that her child might go first,—that she might lay him asleep in his little coffin, safe from the sorrows and troubles of this cruel world, before she took her own flight to a better.

That feeling, which, in the ecstasy of feverish excitement, drives the poor despairing wretch to sever, with her own desperate hand, the link which binds her darling to a life of misery, was actuating in a different manner, this more well disciplined and pious heart.

She had resigned herself to part with her

last treasure,—her last joy,—her last hope on earth. He should go where the angels of little children always behold the face of their Father which is in Heaven ; and she felt that she should not have long to tarry after him.

“ My dear,” said the doctor, “ you don’t look at all well to-day.”

“ No, I don’t feel particularly well. My head aches and throbs, and my eyes become suddenly dim. It feels at times as if I could not see,—at others, as if I should fall. He looks very ill, doctor, and he moans so.”

The doctor tenderly took up the pale skeleton hand which hung listlessly down. The child was in a half-dozing sleep. He was not moaning just then.

“ He seems quiet at present,” said the doctor.

“ Yes, but he is seldom so ; he is so restless and uneasy. His poor little aching eyes keep following mine as if wanting something,—I know not well what ; but it grieves me very much to see it. What is it that he does so want ?”

" You want to go and play in green fields, and see cows and horses, don't you, my little lad?"

The child's eyes brightened, and he smiled.

" Fresh air, and green trees and sunshine,—that is what you both want," said the doctor, looking round the gloomy close little den they were occupying.

The poor mother gave a sickly smile.

" Perhaps," she said,— " but I have not energy to get them."

" But you must rouse yourself. You must summon energy,—you must save yourself and this boy,—you must get out of this directly."

" Ah!"

" I say you must, and without delay. This is just the way such numbers of people go on. Allow themselves to passively sink under evils from which the exertion of a little courage and energy would emancipate them. Come, there can be no moral impossibility, I presume, in your getting for a few weeks into some cottage in the country. You must rouse yourself to the exertion,—you must, indeed."

She made no answer. The power to arouse herself seemed at an end; the trials she had gone through had been too heavy for her strength; all her energies seemed exhausted, and it required great energy in her case to accomplish a move. There met her at the first step that embarrassing, that almost insurmountable difficulty, want of money. Where was she to get the money? To obtain that would require great exertions upon her part, and how was she to make them? Of the money obtained for her watch, which she had with much difficulty prevailed upon Joseph to sell, very little remained. The expenses of the child's illness had consumed it all; her wedding-ring and her little locket, with their scanty clothes, were all the property that remained.

She had intended long before this to have put herself into some way of getting her living; but the child's illness had frustrated every plan; and now her own exceeding weakness made her feel it impossible to adopt any.

She looked down upon her child ; her wan countenance filled with pity and sad uncomplaining sorrow. The gleam of joy with which the poor thing had heard the Doctor's speech, and the intense desire which she herself felt for fresh air, green trees, shade, space, and quiet, told her that what the physician said was true.

The child might yet be saved if she could but obtain these things for him ; but she felt like one paralyzed ; her exceeding depression of strength lay like an incubus upon her ; she saw the object so much desired before her, but she wanted power to rouse herself and seize it.

She was in that state when effort is impossible ; one would rather have done with it and die.

"I scarcely know Mrs. White again this morning," the Doctor persisted.

She had taken the name of White, that of Daubeney being one to excite attention. She wished to remain unknown and untraceable. There was not a friend on earth whom she

wished should find her out ; and as for the world around her, she could not bear the idea of appearing as a personage—as one with a story attached to her—among them.

“I scarcely know Mrs. White again this morning.”

It was a week or more, indeed, since his last visit to her, and the decline in her strength had been alarmingly rapid.

“I am not myself,” she answered, languidly.

“But be yourself—be yourself—once out of this little, unwholesome place, once in the fresh air, you will be astonished at the rapidity with which both you and that poor little fellow will revive.”

She shook her head, and answered—

“Ah! if it could be done!”

“And why cannot it be done?”

She was silent again.

Now, you know, the Doctor could not afford to give his patients not only his gratuitous pains and time, which in cases of necessity he

invariably did, but money enough to help them out of all their troubles. He was a hard-working, striving man himself, with a large family of children.

Generous he might be—generous like the noble Robert Southey—sharing his hard-earned gains with brothers, mother, friends—casting his bread upon the waters—assisting all in his family who needed his assistance, whilst striving and labouring for dear life himself.

Beautiful, heroic picture !

He might have been like that noble-hearted man. He was so, perhaps, in his degree, but in his profession to give money to all whom he met with, wanting it, would have been, indeed, impossible. A little money would have sufficed here ; but, truth to tell, he had not even that little to spare.

He comprehended at last how matters stood ; he looked at her with increased interest and compassion, but saw it was worse than useless to urge the matter further ; so he said no more at that time.

After sitting with her a little longer, and exhorting her to keep up a good heart, for the child was certainly mending, and to take something strengthening which he would order her, the Doctor at last took his leave.

CHAPTER VII.

“ Light of the new-born verdure !
Glory of jocund May !
What gladness is out in leafy lanes !
What joy in the fields to-day !
What sunbursts are in the woodlands !
What blossoms the orchards throng !
The meadows are snowed with daisy stars,
And the winds are thrilled with song.”

W. C. BENNETT.

THE Doctor did not leave the house when he left the room, but, shutting the door of the little apartment carefully after him, entered the shop, and, instead of passing through, as usual, sat down upon the one chair. This chair was placed opposite to where Joseph, behind the counter, spectacles on nose, was busy examining into the internal disorders of an old worn-out silver watch, which had resolutely, refused to go.

The old man was engaged in no very pleasant rumination whilst employed upon this mechanical business. He was thinking of his empty till, which, save the customer who had brought him the aforesaid watch, had remained without any fresh supply for three days, and of two or three old silver watch-cases which he had been necessitated to sell to meet current expenses. He had been sitting there enumerating the little property that remained in his shop, almost as denuded in its way as that of Romeo's Apothecary ; and he was almost as sad, sorrowful, and despairing as his poor guest in the back parlour.

The Doctor sat there some little time without speaking, looking at the wrinkled, time-worn countenance before him ; shaded by the few scanty grey hairs, which fell upon the forehead, and so full of simplicity, and goodness, and truth.

The shop was very dark, but the light from the window beside and above him, fell full upon the aged head; and, surrounded as he

was by the antique articles of his trade, his thin, shrivelled, delicate hands, busied upon the watch, and his eyes intently looking at it, he would have formed, thought the Doctor, a beautiful subject for some old Dutch picture.

The Doctor had entered the shop so silently that Joseph, absorbed in his own meditations, had not heard him, or looked up, and he continued his work, every now and then heaving a sigh, which amounted almost to a groan.

He did look so very sorrowful !

Poor old man! that dear, venerable face of his was so overcast with care, that the Doctor could not help sighing too ; and he did this so audibly that Joseph looked up and saw him sitting there before him.

“ You seem very thoughtful, good friend,” began the Doctor.

“ Do I, sir? Bless me, this watch is in a sad mess, to be sure ; but it has a worse fault than being got out of order,—a worse fault than that, and one that can’t be easily mended,—it’s worn out,—it’s worn out.”

“ Then there is no use in your spending any pains in making it go again, I should conceive ?”

“ Why, not certainly, if it could not be made to go at *all*,—but the watch belongs to a poor fellow, whose occupation requires that he should have a watch, and who has got no money to buy another ; and, therefore, old and worn as it is, we must make a shift to keep it going a little longer.”

“ Which I suppose you will be able to do ? and therefore I do not see exactly why you should look so dolorous and woe-begone, as you did just now, about it.”

“ Was it about the watch, sir ?” looking up quickly, and then turning away his eyes, and shaking his head. “ Ah, no—no ; it’s not about that watch.—Poor worn out thing, —no, no.”

“ What was it about, then ? for, indeed, good Joseph, you *did* look most ruefully.”

“ Other things wear out, beside watches,” replied the old man. “ Other things, with springs, and wheels, and pulleys,—what do I

know? Other things, constructed to *go*, wear out, and can go no more—and the worst of it is, before they can be well spared by those who belong to them."

"Ay, friend, it is the fate of us all. But, to my mind, happiest is the watch that ceases to go before it ceases to be wanted. It is sad to keep ticking on by oneself in a corner,"—and he looked up at one of the old watches that still hung in the window,—“and nobody heeding one, or caring to inquire of one how the time goes.”

“Perhaps, sir, for the watch itself, it may be as you say,—but not for the poor creature, God help him, who has need of the watch—and does not know where on earth to turn when the finger stops.”

“I understand you, Joseph. You are an excellent old fellow; but there is a good deal of *go* in your watch still. However, we will drop the metaphor. I wanted to talk to you about the poor young woman and child who live in your back parlour. Are they relations of yours?”

“ Not blood relations, sir. The relation is a closer and more holy one than even that of blood. When that young lady was in trouble and I was in trouble,—we both fell into trouble together—when everybody else forgot a poor, useless old creature, *she* remembered me. It was more, far more, than when the rich and happy think upon the forlorn and miserable. She found time, in her own misery, and it was very great, to pity me, and rescue me from mine.”

“ And so——”

“ She saved me from much wretchedness, doctor. But nobody, it seems, did that for her which she did for me,—nobody troubled themselves to save her from wretchedness. She sank deeper and deeper in her misery, till at last, dear, blessed creature, she has rested here.”

“ Well, and no such *very* bad resting-place, after all; so that she and the child were but a little more hardy.—But he’s a sad delicate little thing, Joseph, and she, does not seem made to rough it.”

The old man laid the watch he held upon the counter before him, and lifted up his grey eyes to the Doctor, with a piteous, imploring look,—it said, “I know it; but what? What can I do?”

“Why, the thing is this,” continued the Doctor,—“the truth is, that both mother and child are perishing for want of fresh air; and they really must have it,—and so, I think, you could not do better than in getting them out to some little cottage hereaway,—that is to say, if you have a little spare money in your till, for she seems to have none.—It might save her life.”

“They shall have it all,” clasping his hands and casting a glance round upon his ticking property.

“Nay, I don’t see the need of *all*.—But some, I believe, they must have, or die they must and will, Joseph.”

The Doctor was far from understanding the full force of Joseph’s exclamation. Wilkinson had some way or other got the character of being an old hunk, who loved his money,

spending so little as he did ; but the truth was he had little to spend. The Doctor did not believe either in his imputed wealth or his imputed avarice ; but he had no idea of the real state of things.

“ They shan’t die,” said Joseph. “ If anybody’s to die, I know who it shall be.”

“ Don’t talk in that dolorous way, good man. Nobody’s to die. You are to go to a little expense to get the poor creatures out of town. That won’t *bleed* you to death, you know very well, Joseph.”

“ Do you think, sir, that *after* they had been in the country, they could come back again and live here ? Because, you know . . .”

“ I see—I see—you cannot keep two houses, and for people neither kith nor kin of yours, it would not be reasonable to expect it.”

“ Kith or kin—reasonable or unreasonable, has nothing to do with it. I want to know, sir, whether, truth to tell, you think they can live and be healthy and happy here when they’re better?”

“ Well, then, truth to tell, live they might ;

but I am not quite sure of that—but healthy and happy, I very much fear neither mother nor child can be in that little room . . . but have you no other?"

"No other. The house does not belong to me; I only hire this floor. Then you think they could not live here?"

"I don't say live, mind. Perhaps they might *live*."

"But be healthy and happy. Lack-a-daisy! What a strange world it is, and what a strange set of creatures we are! Here have I lived healthy and happy in this place these six years, and never till within this six weeks have known what it was to have a want or a wish. And he that I came after, had lived here seventy-nine years well counted, and never knew what it was, as far as his lodging went, to have a want or a wish—and these two can't even exist where we two have been so content and comfortable. They say all mankind are brothers, yet 'how different one human creature is made from another, sir!'"

"So the old proverb says. It is an indis-

putable fact, and it can't be helped, Joseph. 'What's one man's meat is another man's poison'—and the air which has served your turn well enough, is poisoning them.

"I wish you could have seen that poor child's dying eyes brighten, as I talked to him of green fields and trees ; and the mother's look of despairing resignation, when she told me she could do nothing for him ! The fact is, she is sinking into a sort of atrophy, Joseph. It's grievous to see the change. When first I came here, how active, clever, and attentive she was ! What courage and energy she showed ! How she kept up her heart and spirits ! Now, all this is changed ! The air has poisoned her, friend. She resisted its influences at first—brave, generous hearts do—but it's sure to gain the mastery over them at last. The worst of it is, it kills the life within, before it kills the life without. You understand me. She has no inner life left, Joseph. That phrase expresses what I mean you to understand, as well or better than any other."

"It's very odd, such a subtle thing as air,

to have all these effects. If it had been bad water or unwholesome food, now . . .”

“ Ah, Joseph, Joseph, don’t go beyond the Last. Don’t set up, as too many do, for a natural philosopher, and expound causes and effects without knowing anything about the matter. Put faith in a man, who *ought*, at least, to know what he is about. That said air which you would make nothing of, plays the very deuce in our trade. Did you never hear of the Prince of the power of the air, friend ?”

“ Why, I own I never thought of that. Ay, true. The air—yes, yes ; so you think it’s the air that’s hurting them.”

“ I do, and more—that change of air, and nothing but change of air, will save them. And so good bye,” said the Doctor, taking up his hat, which stood by him on the counter, “ and mark my words, for they are true as you will find. If you’ll take those two into the country, in a week’s time, take my word for it, you won’t know them again. They’ll blossom out like two roses, as fresh as May day ; but if they go on much longer where they are, they’ll

pine and pine, and wither and fade, and at last they'll die, and you'll have to bury them both. . . . And that will go far to break your own good heart, which I think I understand very well, Joseph."

And he went away and left the old man to his ruminations.

Joseph Wilkinson had never been in such a sore straight in his life.

The place might be unhealthy, close, and wretched to others ; but he loved it. He was one of those men who are capable of forming the closest local attachments ; with few of his fellow-creatures to love, local attachment had been almost the strongest sentiment of his life. He loved the old place ; that dull, little shop was everything to him. Surrounded by his ticking watches, he never wanted company. He was happy in his little kingdom as a prince upon his throne. His dominions, it is true, were narrow ; but they were large enough for him—large enough for *his* capacities. More would only have bothered and perplexed him.

Here he had sat, and here he had laboured

at that mechanical employment which suited his capacity so well. Exercising his talent for ingenuity, and in accordance with the quiet which to his feebleness was so necessary ; he had neither spirits nor strength to bustle about for more.

To take a watch slowly to pieces, clean it, adjust it again with the greatest nicety ; to admire the mechanism, and repair, with the most sedulous attention, the little injuries of accident or time—this was his felicity.

True felicity it was ; for it was the full exercise of such talents as he possessed, and in the way best calculated for them ; and is not this the most real happiness of man ?

The two little dark rooms behind the shop, in which many would hardly have been able even to breathe, were to him the acme of comfort.

The noise of the lodgers never disturbed him ; he was used to it, and rather liked it. It came like the cheerful sound of life, stilly to his somewhat dulled ear. The absence of all external view was pleasant ; he did not wish

to be aroused to attention by passing objects ; he liked to have nothing to look upon but the dead wall. What was as death to the imaginative child and to the heart-struck mother, was comfort to him.

He had fallen so completely into the habit of this still life ; it had so completely sufficed to him, that he could with difficulty imagine there could be a want of anything more.

But his admirable indulgence to others, his goodness and benevolence ministered the intelligence to his old narrow mind, which so many of his fellows want ; and led him in a vague manner to comprehend what the Doctor meant, and to believe in the existence of necessities he had never himself experienced.

He cast his eyes sorrowfully round. He dreaded, he abhorred the idea of the exertion demanded of him, in a way that none but those with temperaments like his will find it easy to imagine. But Joseph was a noble hero in his way, and he did what many a world's conqueror has left undone—triumphed over himself and his dearest inclinations, purely for the benefit of others.

“Yes,” said he to himself, “I begin to understand what Doctor Southerton meant; I can recollect when I was a boy myself. It’s a long time ago; but somehow what one felt as a boy one never forgets. I remember when I was sent to the Grey Friars’ School in London, when I was taken away from my father’s farm in Wales, and brought into the streets, how very dreadful it seemed to me. How I used to look round the paved play-ground, walled in by high brick walls, and surrounded by great big smoke-blackened houses, which seemed to shut out the very sky—how I used to look round, and feel as if I were in the most dreary prison that ever was invented. Longing for wings to fly away, I did, though all the boys were laughing and shouting at their sports round me.

“Not one of those town boys had an inkling of what moped me; and when I said it was for want of green fields, they hallooed with laughter. I used to go to sleep and dream that I was walking under the hawthorn hedge, on a fine early May morning, when the dew was

sparkling upon the grass, and the sun was rising in his glory ; that I was listening to the throstles and blackbirds ; and then I would be started, awake suddenly, and look round the dark, low, big, bare-walled room, and hear nothing but the snoring of fifty lubberly boys. I remember it well ; I felt as if I must have fresh air or die.

“ And that day that I was walking in some close, back, dismal streets with another boy, and we went into a little court to see his mother, and there was a thrush singing in one of the windows. Oh ! poor little fellow that I was ! how I *did* cry !

“ One ought not to forget such things.

“ Old people ought not to forget that they once were young, and how it went with them then. Townsfolk ought not to forget that they may once have been country folk, and how hard it is for country folk to forget green fields.”

Such were Joseph’s meditations, as he sat and delicately cleaned the tiny wheels, and

repaired the miniature chain of the watch he held in his hand.

"Yes," thought he, and he could not help sighing at the thought, "there is but one way, and it must and shall be done. There is little enough here," said he, unlocking the drawer of his till, and taking out one golden seven-shilling piece, two half-crowns, and a sixpence, "this would go no ways; it will be a great expense and a great change; but there is one way, and only one way, and it shall be done."

Now the only way that suggested itself to Joseph, by means of which to raise the wind, was to dispose at once of all his property, and sell the good-will of his shop,—not worth much now-a-days, to be sure,—but with the money, he could carry Mrs. Daubeney and the child into the country, and settle himself down with them there.

They must go into the cheapest part of Great Britain that could be found, and where was that? He did not know much about one county or another, or about cheapness or dearness among them; but there was one

place that he did know something of, and that place was North Wales.

He had been born in the Vale of Festiming. He recollects well the little farm in which his father had lived. The simple, unambitious habits of life in that remote corner of the world. Why should they not go there? He would hire a little cottage and a few fields, and he would set himself up as a small farmer; and the mother and child would be healthy and happy; and for him !

Why, it did not much matter what became of *him*. He had not very long to live. The others were young, and had the world before them.

“And you will do this for my child, Joseph? This to save my child? Heaven bless you for it! Heaven shower its choicest, choicest blessings upon your head! It may be very selfish; oh! I fear it is very, very selfish to accept this sacrifice; but it is my boy.

“Look at him, dear Joseph Wilkinson ! as there he sleeps ; did you ever behold so delicate, so beautiful a creature ? He seems to have been formed of some other material than what makes up man’s mould.”

And the mother stooped down to kiss him with a feeling of pride and pleasure she had not before ventured to indulge. She had been so long accustomed to the expectation that the untoward circumstances among which he had been forced to live, would end by robbing her of the treasure of her heart, that she had never ventured to count upon it.

Now a fresh spring of hope, a glow of happiness to which she had been so long a stranger, warmed her heart, she ventured to look forward. Who can live and not look forward ? It is worse than death to be imprisoned in the present.

The boy would be carried far from this world of London and its neighbourhood, in which the whole of her own English life had been passed ; a world darkened to her by all the sufferings with which it was associated,

and which, artificial as it is, could never have been congenial to her nature.—

Her imagination flew far back to the lovely shores of the Levant ; to the blue mountains of the East ; to the fragrant gardens and the purpling sunsets.

A cottage among the mountains ! That would be something of the same kind.

Poor Joseph, sorrowful and sad, began to make his arrangements. He was very, very glad to see Lilla so happy ; very, very glad to see the little boy improving—for hope and expectation had already worked a part of the beneficial effects expected from the change. He was glad he had resolved upon the sacrifice—heartily glad ; he never repented what he had done.

But pain is pain—sacrifice is sacrifice. All have not the strength to go on their way rejoicing—trusting “that what is sown in tears shall be reaped in joy.”

He expected no joy. And he was to sell his watches, and give up his shop.

With a heavy heart he took his hat and

stick, and went to consult with a little auctioneer who lived hard by, as to the disposing of his property, and as to the probability of finding a cottage where he wanted to go.

The little auctioneer advised, as auctioneers naturally do, an auction; and that the goodwill of the business, as well as all his other possessions, should be disposed of in this way.

But having settled this part of the business, in which he was most interested, to his own satisfaction, he went a little farther into the subject of Joseph's plans, and told him that he happened, by good luck, to have a relation who lived in the part of Wales he spoke of; and that he would write and ask him to look out for a suitable cottage and little farm of a few acres attached.

And so, heavily and sadly poor Joseph returned, all being finally settled, and that consoling self-flattery no longer possible,—“that something or other would turn up to prevent the dreaded catastrophe.”

Nothing or other did. Things moved forward with that precipitation which brings us

to the consequence we have permitted ; and yet deprecate with such pertinacity.

Poor man ! He stood there, and saw his watches and all his little property sold off, lot by lot, to the highest bidder. It was like a death by inches.

His little furniture, too—the chair in which he had sat—the old desk where he kept his accounts ; the small round table where he took his tea. All ! and he so loved them all ! must go—He could not afford to carry furniture down so far.

Happily, Lilla was quite unaware of the extent of the sacrifice her humble friend was making.

That any one could possibly regret the wretched life of this dismal dungeon, was too incredible to enter into her head. She was filled with the warmest gratitude for what Joseph had done ; but her gratitude was measured rather by her own happiness than by his sacrifices.

All, however, was at last accomplished ; bills paid, and money received, and Joseph Wilkin-

son, with the amount of a hundred pounds in bank notes in his pocket, set out with Lilla and her little boy for Montgomeryshire in the heavy coach.

It must not be supposed that Lilla intended, when she allowed Mr. Wilkinson to change his manner of life for her sake, to remain a burden upon him. She intended to be his servant and housekeeper, to spare him the expense of any other. To scrub floors and clean kettles ; to sink into the lowest drudgery of life, was a thing to which she felt perfectly indifferent.

She was quite sensible of her own intellectual deficiencies. She who had learned nothing, or next to nothing, could not pretend to teach others. The part of a governess was, therefore, out of the question ; that of humble companion she could not endure the thought of ; that of upper servant in any family, with servants' hall associations, her heart revolted at. Besides, any one of these would entail the necessity of parting with her boy, a thing worse than death—impossible.

But the idea of being domestic servant,

though the only domestic servant, to the kind old man, had nothing in it terrible to her. It was rather the contrary ; she liked the thoughts of it.

Great misfortunes restore us to nature—emancipate us from the shackles of conventional life. There is something exhilarating in the sense of this freedom—something wholesome and heartening in the living for realities alone.

She enjoyed the thoughts of thus falling at once out of the sphere of artificial life, in which she had suffered much, even whilst prosperous ; and in adversity had been so miserable. She liked the idea of working with her hands. She fancied herself in her little kitchen, scouring her kettles, or making messes for Joseph. Simple in her wants—unfettered in all her actions.

As the civilized savage, when he flies back to his native woods, so feels the child of artificial society, when relieved from conventional life.

She forgot—she did not know—she could not be aware of what was before her ; the

evils that would attend this emancipation for herself. Had she been alone in the world, it would have been all very well ; but she forgot her boy.

She forgot that, do what we will, we are slaves to the age in which we live ; and that, in a century advanced as ours, it is vain to shake off the trammels of society. That to be singular, except in virtue, is an evil. That to be without education in a world where all men are educated,—without advantages where all have more or less advantages, is to be poor indeed.

Evil is linked with evil. She may do her best. She has been deprived of the means of prospering ; and her humility, her cheerful goodness, her earnest simplicity, all her efforts, are of little avail.

So, alas ! it is in the actual world, if not in the world of romance. The energy of one strenuous heart may do much, but it cannot do all ; and woe to those who could and might have assisted the poor striver against the currents of ill fortune, and have not !

Will he sink? Must he sink? Can no exertions save him?

The cottage stands in a remote mountain valley, not in the vale of Festiming, where his father's cottage had stood, close by the little mountain village of that name, but in a narrow valley diverging from this, and winding far and far away among the mountains.

This was the little patrimony which Joseph, just in the very nick of time, as people say, found himself the possessor of.

When they arrived at Festiming, of course the first thing Joseph did was to enquire for any of his relations who might be living. There was one, and but one,—his father's brother: a man past a century old, who was still residing in his own cottage, in this secluded place.

The grey-haired landlady of the little inn, which stands in the principal street of the humble village of Festiming,—I think the village

is called by the name of the beautiful vale to which it appends, but am not quite sure—The landlady of the little inn remembered all about Joseph's father very well. Changes are few, and traditional memory strong in such places, so she offered to go with him herself in her little mountain cart, drawn by two donkeys, and introduce him to the old bedridden relation.

Up the pleasant vale and through its lovely scenery they went, and at length they turned abruptly into the narrow gorge, where the cottage of the father's brother was situated.

It was a wild but beautiful scene. The mountains covered with rich purple heath, broken every now and then by huge pinnacles and faces of grey stone, rose up on either side, scaling the heavens. A few cultivated spots might be discovered here and there; and attached to each a low-roofed cabin, that scarcely deserved the name of a cottage, built of grey unhewn stone, scarcely to be distinguished from the rocks amid which it seemed to grow.

A stream, clear and bright as crystal, ran

foaming through the little valley, by the side of which, over a narrow and deeply rutted road, the little cart made its way, which contained Joseph and Mrs. Evans, the landlady ; Lilla and her little boy having been left at the inn.

The cottage to which they were bound, and at which, after going about four mountain miles, which mean six, they at last arrived, was the very last in that narrow vale. Beyond it, the mountain wilderness rose in its wild magnificence,—hoary, barren, desolate, and most wild. An enormous mountain here closed up the valley, and at its foot the cottage stood.

It was rather more considerable than most of those they had passed, and four fields enclosed by stone walls lay round it ; two of these were at present covered with a most scanty crop of oats ; one was in rough hay, and the other in potatoes.

Diminutive black cattle and still more diminutive sheep, might be seen wandering about among the rocks and precipices, feeding upon the scanty herbage to be found here and there.

The old uncle, as it would seem, was not without his fair portion of mountain wealth.

The sight of extreme old age is a melancholy and disheartening one. When forty years have elapsed since the man was seventy, thirty years since the days had set in when he should say, "there is no pleasure in them,"—

"Sans eyes, sans nose, sans taste, sans everything."

The glazed, dim eyes were sunk in their sockets, the skin drawn like parchment over the wasted face and hands.—One hundred and ten years old was this aged mountaineer.

And yet he still clung to life! He did not want to die. There must be something essentially sweet in life itself, that men should love it so, when everything that would seem to give existence value is gone; but so it seems to be. The longer men live the more they seem to love to live; the hold of life seems strengthened in them.

What will it be when the life shall be

lengthened,—lengthened illimitably, and in happiness !

He sat there in his old straight-backed arm-chair, for I said bedridden ; but it was not literally so, cowering over a turf fire, though it was the middle of August ; and as Mrs. Evans entered, he lifted up his dim eyes, shook his venerable locks a little, and welcomed her by stretching out his skinny hand.

“ Well, neighbour,—glad to see you again, —How is it going with you ?”

“ Why, much as usual, thank you, Master Wilkinson.—And how do I find it with you ?”

“ Bad enough, bad enough ! I’m getting deafer, and I’m getting darker, and I’m getting lonesomer,—ay, lonesomer ! There it is. That’s it, neighbour.—All dead and gone,—dead, gone, and forgotten too, that I knowed in my day, and not a soul left for I to care for, or to care for me.”

“ Nay, nay, that’s talking sadly.—Not care for you !—*I* care for you for one, or what am I here for ?”

“ You care !—What would you care if I

were in the churchyard to-morrow?—Why should you care?—Don't try to come over me with that nonsense."

" Well, I am sure I should be sorry,—I've been so long used to see you," said the honest landlady ; " and, besides, you're the wonder of the mountains,—the pride of these parts, you know. Not many places, I take it, in England or Wales either, where men live to be one hundred and ten."

The old man gave a hollow, unpleasant laugh, half derisive, half triumphant.

" But," continued Mrs. Evans, " how are you getting on? How does Peggy behave?"

" Bad enough, bad enough—a tiresome jade—cares for me no more than for an old shoe. Always a-gadding—always a-gadding. Forgot my posset last night; and there was I a coughing and a wheezing, a wheezing and a coughing."

" And Timothy?"

" Ah! Timothy's an old rogue. How do I know what he's about, having it all his own way, and nobody to look after him? I'll tell

you what, neighbour," laying his withered hand upon her arm, "he swore to me that my last lot of sheep only fetched three shillings and fourpence halfpenny a-head at Tan-y-bwleh market, last Monday, where they come a-buying up the sheep to take to England; and I know they sold for three shillings and eightpence—I was told so by a man who was there, and many were fetching more. And I'll tell you how it is, Mrs. Evans; I'm a lone, helpless, old fellow, and I haven't a relation left in the world, and that's what I'm wanting to look after my property for me."

"And that's what I've brought you, in the shape of your brother John's son Joseph," said she, turning to Wilkinson, who stood there, to his astonishment, suddenly rejuvenated. Such is the force of comparison. Joseph felt as if he were almost a youth again by the side of his uncle.

"Joseph Wilkinson," said Mrs. Evans, raising her voice, "son of John, he who went to school to London, and was in business there.

You remember him ? Your own brother's child."

" No, no ; I remember nothing about him. What did you say ? Joseph ! I know nothing of Joseph."

" Yes, but you do. You remember all about it quite well. You never forget old days, you say, and that's true. Don't you remember he went to the Grey Friars' school ? *My* mother was a girl then ; but she remembered all about Joseph, and we used to hear of him. He used to send things from London town till his father died, to remind us like. And now please to look at him, Gaffer Wilkinson ; and if he's not as like his father as two peas, may I never eat green peas again ! Come into the light, will you ? Now look, Gaffer."

" That's my brother come back from the grave, to fetch me," said the old man. " Brother ! what do you do here ?"

" It's not your brother. How you wander ! It's your brother's son, Joseph," screamed Mrs. Evans.

"No it isn't—It's brother John himself."

"Well, he's come back, at all events, be he John or Joseph; and the only thing to ask is, will you own him, and have him for a relation, or not? For you're both of you to seek in that article, to my mind," said Mrs. Evans, laughing.

"Why, if I could be sure it was John or Joseph."

"Make yourself quite easy on that score. It's as certainly John's Joseph as you're alive."

In the necessity, shut out from commerce with the living world as he was, of believing some one, of putting faith in somebody, old Gaffer Wilkinson had habituated himself to trust in Mrs. Evans. She had, indeed, a sort of hereditary right to his confidence, from connections and friendships interrupted by death but not forgotten, and upon which it is unnecessary to enlarge.

Somebody we must lean upon--somebody the miserable solitary of extreme old age must trust.

Gaffer Wilkinson trusted Mrs. Evans implicitly, and suspected every one in the world besides. She might have done anything she pleased with him, have taken any advantage of him. Fortunately, most fortunately for him, she was a woman of spirit, a woman of the highest honour. She would have scorned, not only to take the least advantage of the helpless old man, but even to profit, in the slightest degree, by her influence over him.

Everybody supposed that Mrs. Evans would be his heir when he died; but she believed Joseph to be still living, though she did not know where, and she regarded the inheritance as his by right. And now, when he appeared, the alacrity, the pleasure with which she welcomed him, and acknowledged him, were beautiful. And it was all so naturally done. It would have been so impossible for her to act otherwise, that there was not even a feeling of self-satisfaction connected with the matter.

And so the old man was persuaded, upon the faith of his confidence in Mrs. Evans, to acknowledge his nephew. And so circum-

stances, in their ceaseless flow, carried Lilla and her son along their stream, and deposited her, under the guardianship of Joseph Wilkinson, in this remote, this almost savage mountain valley.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Yet Edwin was no vulgar boy.”

BEATTIE.

WHO is he that sits upon that rock in the wilderness ?

The hoary mountains rise around him, raising their peaked heads, one behind another, to the clear blue cloudless sky. Not a speck is upon the deep azure against which they stand out darkly, and strongly defined,—the crests of these everlasting hills.

His dress is simple ; that of a mere herd—

a shepherd-boy ; but his face is of no common sort. His large fervid eye is fixed upon the glorious scene around him ; his lips are parted with enthusiastic pleasure ; the blood is kindling upon his cheek ; that warm poet's blood of his which mounts and mantles, with every affection of his too, too sensitive soul. There he sits as one inspired, a solitary in this wilderness of God.

One of those wondrously-gifted beings, with faculties of transcendent power,—reason, —imagination : intimate perception of things, and lofty moral inspirations. Endowed with that fine sense of the beautiful ; that intuition of the infinite, which is the attribute of genius, and possessing a character in which force and enthusiasm, perseverance and energy, are united. Capable of everything which would render him a hero and a benefactor among men ; their blessing and their ornament.

And he is buried here !

Unconscious he is of the gifts he has received from his Creator,—gifts useless and unavailing now. Worse than that, they are perilous

endowments,—sources of strange discomforts—of dark struggles—of painful contradictions and misconceptions. And why? Because he cannot be understood by others; he cannot even understand himself.

How should he, poor boy?

Even his mother understood him but by halves, though she had been once something in the same case, though in a far inferior degree. These high gifts, when bestowed upon women, owing to their more happy flexibility of temperament, and, perhaps, to their diminished strength, their more delicate physical frame, occasion less of this painful division between the inner and the outward life, than in a man when at issue with the circumstances surrounding him.

Women at times, or in countries, have suffered much from the artificial arrangements of society, where prejudices and customs forbade the development of their minds. But men suffer yet more when circumstances are unfavourable, and some mighty mind is condemned to virtual inactivity. Worse, far worse

it is, when the condemnation is to ignorance. Ignorance of which in its ignorance it is only barely conscious.

Such was the fate to which the fetters of narrow circumstances had condemned this boy.

His mother, completely uneducated herself, could do nothing to assist him. She could only sympathize with feelings that no one else understood ; and sigh over a restlessness and uneasiness which others, less gifted with intellect than herself, might have wondered at and blamed.

He was without books,—without companions,—without aids or assistance ; yearning for he scarce knew what,—alone with the dumb unintelligible nature round him.

The boy wears a common shepherd's coat, the dress of the country in its simplest form, and his days are spent in the superintendence of the little farm.

First, as a simple shepherd's boy, to tend the sheep and black cattle when sent out upon the mountains ; he being assisted by the direction

of that old servant of Joseph's uncle, whom, after the old man's death, Wilkinson still retained in his service.

The circumstances of the little family were so extremely narrow, that one servant girl of about the age of twelve, to assist Lilla, and relieve her from the very lowest household drudgery, was all they could afford.

Lilla, with a generous courage and noble contempt of external circumstances, which distinguished her, had, upon her settlement in Wales, at once thrown aside every habit which had belonged to the position she once held in society; and dressed according to the fashion of the peasantry around her, with her woollen petticoat, open gown, white mob cap, to which, at times, was added the black hat and red cloak, pursued her avocations, looking almost more beautiful than she had ever done; with the fresh colour upon her cheek proper to this mountain life. The labour was not hard, and she, happy, thus situated, that superior intellectual habits had not rendered intellectual society essential to her, spent her days cheer-

fully ; fulfilling her duties,—looking up to God,—loving Joseph Wilkinson with affectionate gratitude,—adored by him as a tutelary angel, and wrapt up in her son.

A happy, happy boy, he had at first been. The years of his childhood had been passed in a way delightful to all boys, more especially to such a one as this, filled with lofty imaginings. To drive his beloved sheep and little black cattle among the mountains,—to find out for them sweet juicy grasses, growing in little clefts among the hills,—to cast himself upon the grass by the side of some clear rushing mountain stream, whilst his peaceful herds fed around him,—to look into the crystal depths of the water, and feed his fancy with the images of unearthly beauty which that gleaming pebbly world below reveals,—to clamber over some ridge, whilst his cattle were feeding in peace below ; ridge above ridge to ascend, till the glorious view of limitless mountains, peak beyond peak, and crag beyond crag, blended with the fleecy clouds and the clear blue sky. Such were his delights. Such

things elevated him,—to a sense of enthusiastic gladness, which none, perhaps, but the poet fully knows. Lifting up and expanding his soul,—filling his fancy with bright and beautiful images, which struggled for utterance, but could not, as yet, find words.

He was almost, indeed, in the position of one born deaf and dumb. He had not learned words.—The use of words, except as regards the common, ordinary business of life, was unknown to him. He was a stranger to all the secrets of language,—not only those secrets to be learned from acquaintance with various languages, so rich in their various ways,—but of his own. He wanted the means not only for the expression, but, we may say, even for the creation of the thoughts struggling within him so darkly. It would not have been so had he been born among the Scottish, or North of England border mountains, where so much traditional poetry exists,—where old ballads, and long-remembered love ditties, circulate from generation to generation.

The Welsh language, it is said, is not

without its romantic poetry also ; but none of it reaches the English ear; and, though taken to Wales, a child living with an English mother, and an English friend, and his only Welsh associate a rude, coarse, farming man, who cared as much for poetry as he did for the Bey of Tunis, he learned nothing as a boy of that language but its commonest colloquial phrases. He had no Welsh books ; and, without books, what do we know of a language ?

The little acquaintance of his mother with society and life, as it existed in England, made her incapable of estimating, to their full extent, the disadvantages under which her son laboured.

She was not altogether without anxiety, however, upon the subject. She longed to have him taught something, she did not exactly know what.—To read and write he learned from herself, and Joseph insisted upon making him a good accountant, and an excellent one he became, learning with a facility which perfectly amazed the good old man. The boy

did not brutalize, he did not degrade, in this wild, untaught life. There is that in some natures that cannot do either. The poet is a poet, be he where he may. Conventional proprieties he may be ignorant of, but essential refinement of mind is his inheritance, by a higher prerogative than man can give.

The imagination ennobles.

As he sits upon that mountain brow, in that shabby, patched old shepherd's coat of his—his clumsy, hob-nailed shoes encumbering his feet, and that old rent hat thrown back from his brow; as he sits there, with earnest gaze drinking in the wide expanse beneath him, his imagination swelling with rapture, bathing in the soft melting lights upon those distant mountains, where heaven and earth seem blending,—seeking to penetrate into the immensity, the infinitude of beauty, which surrounds him, and asking what it is that this loveliest curtain conceals?

Has he not the face of one inspired?

As he lifts up his heart to the great living God, revealed to him in the awful simplicity

of his Bible, almost the only book which the boy had read, and read, and re-read,—as he marvels upon the wonderful histories of the dim old world,—upon the mighty men of valour, and the lofty prophets of God,—his mind stretches forth, and then he longs to penetrate into that world, hidden behind this mighty screen of mountains,—where bad men oppress, and great and good men strive and struggle, and suffer and overcome.

This is what his heart is yearning after.

Desire of action. It is yearning for action,—generous, disinterested, strenuous action; that it is which fills his earnest mind, and gives emphatic expression to every feature.

At other times the scene within the inner chamber of his mind changes, and the poet reigns alone. He listens to the hoarse music of the winds, as they come rushing up these lonely vallies; he lies, half-dozing, under the shadow of that rock, whilst his flocks, in the noonday sun, are reposing around him, and dreams and visions fill his mental eye.

Visions of unutterable beauty and tenderness !

The sun sinks, and it is time to go home.

He starts up from his half-slumber,—calls his dog, who has lain there dozing and snapping at the flies,—a dreamer like his master,—and slowly collecting his sheep and his small black cattle, in a musing mood follows them home.

Awakened from those visions, what is he ?

A poor, obscure shepherd boy, amid the solitary mountains, there to labour and there to die.

To labour upon that which ministers only to the daily bread,—which once effected, leaves not a trace behind. Uselessly to labour, except for the bare purposes of maintaining a mere sordid existence ; uselessly for himself and for others shall his existence be passed. This he feels and knows, and he divines that there are higher and better purposes to be fulfilled. But how shall he attempt them ?

The impassable mountains girdle him round
and shut him in.

“ My Walter, do come in ? I thought you never would come in this evening. See how long the shadows are. The chimney shadow reaches to the brook. You do not use to be so late as that. Don’t, dear Walter ; it makes me uneasy—it makes me unhappy. Pray do not do so again.”

“ No, mother,” taking off his tattered hat, and hanging it upon a peg against the kitchen wall ; for in that apartment the mother and son lived ; what had been the best parlour being now Joseph Wilkinson’s bed-room.

“ Dear mother, I won’t be so late again. Truth to tell, I forgot the time. What says poor Joseph’s watch ?”

“ Nine o’clock ; and you have not even dined—you forgot to take your bread and cheese with you. How hungry you must be ! but I have got your supper all ready. Here,

sit down, dear, by the window. I will put it upon the table there. Look ! is it not pretty to-night ? The honeysuckle you trained so nicely smells so sweet, and that wild briar with its scarlet flowers.”

“ Very, very sweet. Thank you, dear and best of mothers ; but let *me* set the table. You must not wait upon your son, mother. How has Joseph been all day ?”

“ Much the same ; suffering, I am afraid, poor fellow, at times ; for he moans now and then—at others, he is mostly asleep ; but he says little or nothing, and when I ask him how he feels, always answers ‘ Pretty well.’ Like himself to the last, Walter, cannot bear to give uneasiness to any living creature, not even by complaint.”

“ I wonder—I wonder—”

“ What ! Walter ?”

“ Does that doctor from Festiming understand how to do all that could be done for him ?”

“ I am sure I do not know. I hope so ; but I am so sadly ignorant in such things.

Ah, Walter ! what would I give now to have learned more about realities when I was as young as you are ? Every day and every hour of a life, now growing into a long one, only makes me regret my wasted youth the more."

Her son started.

She had touched the tender chord—the shaft that was rankling.

" Why do you start so ?"

" Oh, don't mind, mother ; something suddenly pained me at that moment."

" What is it, my dear ?" said she, coming up to him anxiously. " You don't look well ; you are not well. Something is the matter. Oh, Walter !"

" Dearest mother, I am quite well. Don't vex yourself about me. Come, where is my supper ? I am rather in want of it, you know."

" Oh, all ready," turning away, and going to the little fire-place where the turf fire smouldered in a small grate made of a few

iron bars, and standing in the middle of the wide, open, smoke-blackened chimney-place.

“It has been waiting for you so long, that at least it will be well done ; and I hope you will enjoy it ;” placing the little savoury dish of mutton and vegetables before him.

But he could not eat it with his usual relish ; his appetite was gone. He tried, however, to do his best, whilst his mother busied herself, as it was her wont to do, about the little, low-roofed apartment ; arranging her plates upon the shelves behind the oaken dresser, or hanging up sundry bundles of dried herbs and bags of marigold and rose-leaves which she had been collecting, upon the hooks which studded two immense cross beams. Her constant occupations, the excellent health which she enjoyed, the wholesome simplicity of a life in harmony with so simple a character, had preserved to Lilla a temper of almost uninterrupted cheerfulness. Her only anxiety was about her son ; and her ignorance of the immensity of the wants under which he laboured, of the cruel extent of the disadvantages to

which he was exposed, kept her, as I think I have said, in a happy delusion as to the real state of the case.

As far as regarded his mere worldly prospects, indeed, she was easy enough. This cottage and the adjoining fields were Joseph Wilkinson's ; and Joseph Wilkinson had no relations of his own. He had made his will, and left everything he possessed first to the mother, and afterwards to the son ; thus ensuring a subsistence to both.

For herself, she wished for nothing more ; she was perfectly contented. The narrowness of her circumstances was not felt, as far as she herself was concerned. She wanted nothing. She had fallen, it is true, to almost the lowest grade in society ; but the obscurity in which she lived did not make her unhappy. The weight of all fell upon the son.

So she went, as was her custom, cheerfully accomplishing her little task ; and he, having put away his supper, came and sat down before the open casement, over which the honeysuckle and common sweetbriar were

floating, and against which the rosemary and rue were growing ; bent his head upon his two crossed arms, and sank into a reverie as he gazed vacantly down the little valley before him.

It was, indeed, a most secluded scene. Completely shut in by the mountains, which sloped upwards, and on either side covered with heath and broken heaps of stones, amid which, every now and then, a bold face of rock jutted forward ; a more desolate view cannot easily be imagined, and it had no marked grandeur of feature to recommend it.

The soil was wretchedly poor. Even the little portion inclosed by the stone walls, and constituting the fields, could scarcely boast of more fertility than the uncultivated slopes around. A scanty crop of oats was there, with red poppies, and purple cockle-flower, rendering it much more picturesque than productive ; and some rows of dwarfed potatoe-tops, already in flower, this was the whole crop.

It was with difficulty he had coaxed this rose and honeysuckle to grow, by indefatigable

watering, round the window. He looked first at the miserably scanty crop, that promised to reward his labour of the year, then down the featureless, desolate valley, and up at the dark, barren mountains which shut him in; and a dulness, such as had often before, but never in an equal degree, visited him, fell upon his spirits.

As years rolled on, unmarked by any event but the gradual decline of poor Joseph into imbecility, and the something faded and worn that began to impair his mother's beauty, the mind of Walter, all unaided as it was, had imperceptibly expanded. Much had he thought, much speculated upon—God, and nature, and himself; sometimes in a restless impatience to know more—at others, in a glorious enthusiasm, aroused by what he did know. His reflections had been often obscured by doubts, his spirits often irritated by vain wishes; but this night the tone of his mind assumed a darker hue than ever. The question he had inadvertently put to his mother, as to the possibility of obtaining better medical

assistance for poor Joseph than the village of Festiming furnished, had awakened a whole train of painful ideas.

Better there must certainly be, could he get at it—of that there could be no doubt. This little mountain town of Festiming, or even that house at Tan-y-bwlech, with the great man's park and palace near, was not all the world.

Faint rumours of that distant world had reached him, even in his mountain valley. When he went with his cattle to meet the dealer at Festiming, and sat down at the little inn, a stray newspaper would now and then fall into his hand, or a twopenny tract, sold by an itinerant dealer: these had been devoured with intense curiosity, but rather with the curiosity with which the untutored mind devours romances, than as having reference to actual life. But now it suddenly struck him, and, as if for the first time, that these things constituted the true life; that the little nook of earth to which he had been confined was but a mere speck in the vast universe of existence—of human existence; that he was a

man, a full-grown man, and of no more use, or power, or efficacy in the creation, than when he was a little boy.

That even as regarded poor Wilkinson, his and his mother's best and only friend, the more than father to them both, he had done nothing, attempted nothing. He had gone dreaming on in those regions of his imagination, where he alone could find consolation—he had left the good old man to suffer, without one attempt to relieve him.

And yet what could he do? Where could he turn? What was he fit for?—He who knew nothing of men, neither of their characters, nor their modes of life, nor their requirements, except such as might be learned from the rude, uninstructed, half-savage peasantry who lived around him.

He sickened at the thought of his utter ignorance, his helpless incapacity; and he sighed—almost groaned aloud.

His anxious mother was at his side in a moment.

"What is it, my dear Walter? You are not happy."

"Not happy!" said he, fully conscious of the extent of his unhappiness, and the more anxious, upon that account, to hide it from his mother. "What makes you think I am not happy?"

"Why do you sigh so?"

"Did I sigh? Oh! weariness—that is all."

True enough, it *was* weariness—utter weariness of spirit.

"Oh! but people don't sigh in that way for mere weariness, my son; and you don't look happy. I have fancied for some time that you did not look quite happy, and have feared to ask you, lest I should find it to be true."

"Well, mother, then one thing does make me unhappy, and that is," said he, surveying his long youthful limbs, for he was come to man's full height, "that at my age I can scarcely do more for you and poor Joseph than when I was ten years old.—Just tend

the sheep, and dig the potato ground,—that is all.

“Fit occupation for a life!” added he, bitterly.

“My dear love, what is there else to do? I am sure it is not your fault. You would do more if you could; if there were anything more to be done.”

“There *is* nothing more to be done,” he cried out, passionately, “and that it is which makes me so wretched.” The truth burst forth at last before he was aware and against his will; and the happy veil which had obscured her vision fell at once from the poor mother’s eyes.

She stood looking at him like one transfixed for some moments, with eyes wide open, and staring like one aghast. A world of thoughts, of recollections, of associations, which had slumbered till they seemed forgotten, were rushing tumultuously into her mind.

She saw him there as he stood, looking so like his father! More beautiful than his father ever had been in face; but, ah! how different

in appearance. He, with his rude, untrained limbs, his coarse sun-browned skin, his rounded shoulders, his sordid garb, his rough, red hands, limbs of such surpassing symmetry; but ungraceful in their attitudes. The contrast of the want of external development struck upon her sense. She was still only vaguely conscious, that this was but a type of the crippled mind.

She looked at him with a sorrow quite new, with an ineffable sense of unavailing regret.

The father! the guilty father, was contrasted with the hapless innocent son.

He, blessed with every advantage that education, society, travel, wealth, could give; brilliant, fascinating, beautiful, accomplished! His boy, shut in within these mountains, wanting in every advantage that could give development to youth, uneducated, unfashioned, untaught, a mere ragged driver of cattle! Yet looking, as there he stood, as Apollo might be supposed to have looked when he descended to the part of herdsman to Admetus. She did not make the illustration, but you may.

"Ah!" she cried, and turned hastily away, and muttered, "What a wretch am I!"

That night Lilla laid her head upon her pillow a very wretch indeed.

The train of distressing thought had been awakened, never more to be soothed and allayed.

What had she been doing all this time? she asked herself. How could she have been so heartlessly passive and content? She thought she was doing her duty. Her conscience had been at rest, because she had cheerfully submitted to her own privations; had allowed herself no repinings, no lookings back, accepting the lowly portion with cheerful acquiescence. But she had forgotten her boy, and thought little of the fate to which he was condemned. This obscure life had become as a matter of course with her, and she had allowed herself to be content to look upon it as a matter of course for him.

She had satisfied herself with the thought that, after all, he was better off than many around him. There was the little property secured.

He would be as well off, or better off than the people around him.

But, ah, how unlike the people around him he was !

As she lay upon her wakeful pillow, her perceptions sharpened by that sort of feverish excitement which attends these watchings of the night, she seemed for the first time fully aroused to the consciousness of how great this difference was.

His gentle manners, unpolished as might be his attitudes ; the bright gleams that shot from his eye ; the sweetness of his most expressive smile ; even the very impatience, and what sometimes appeared to her unreasonableness, of some of his moods, and the eccentricity of some of his habits, seemed for the first time to reveal that it was no ordinary being that stood thus disguised by his rugged outside garb before her.

The mental contrast which she had drawn between him and his father could not be forgotten; it had awakened a whole train of reflections and remembrances.

Her tranquillity was at an end. The passionate love, the impetuous anxieties of a mother, were aroused, and to remain quiet under them was impossible.

Something must be done ; but what ?

CHAPTER IX.

“ She lingers, bound by holy spell—
 But now upon her ear,
What sound has struck like dreadful knell,
 And pales her cheek to hear.”

MRS. H. SANDBACH, *Aurora*.

THEY were sitting the next evening together by the window, for the labours of the day were over. Restless, and in a painful state of irritation against himself, against circumstances, against everything and everybody, he had wandered after his herds. No longer alive to the charms of nature, he was possessed only with an indescribable and intense desire to

break through this chain of mountains, which, like the walls of a prison, hemmed him in—to rush upon the theatre of the world and to mix with men.

He little heeded how or where, so he did but escape and enter upon this world. His life of ignorance and inactivity was no longer to be endured ; he agonized to live—to live and to learn. Quiescence without the desire for rest, is misery to all. Who, that has been long confined to a recumbent posture by a broken limb, but feels the irritating desire to leave it and walk again abroad, almost insupportable.

The veriest sluggard that ever asked for “a little more folding of the hands to sleep,” experiences this abhorrence at times ; how much more the spirit full of activity and energy, from the exercise of which it was debarred ?

The painful thoughts in which he had spent the day, had left their trace upon his features.

His eyes were gloomy, and his countenance troubled. The poor mother's expression was more dismal still. Grief and perplexity—the conviction that much was wrong—the incapacity to set it right, were written in it. Her thoughts were all in disturbance and confusion. Poor Lilla was still more miserable than her son ; and her misery, great as it was, was enhanced by the reflection of that which was visible upon his face.

The child thinks far less of the unhappiness of the parent, than the parent does of that of the child. Such is the order of nature. And though gentle, generous, and good, the intensity of his young and ardent aspirations, and the vividness of his own thoughts and expressions, absorbed him. He observed not the cloud upon his mother's brow, whilst every pang she suffered, was doubled when she looked at his.

She sat on one side of the little honeysuckle-framed window ; he opposite to her.

In vain for them the sun sank gloriously behind the mountain ridges, and cast a purple, lingering light up the valley. In vain for them the little brook ran tinkling along, sounding with pleasant distinctness on that stilly evening. In vain the wind played among the branches of sweetbriar, and flung their perfume into the little apartment. They no longer enjoyed these sweet consolations of nature, prodigal everywhere. Their minds were too much pre-occupied for such perceptions.

The mother had her knitting in her hand ; she held down her head and plied her needles silently. The son rested his elbow upon the window-seat, and his chin in the hollow of his hand, and looked out upon the prospect ; but he saw of it nothing.

From time to time she looked up at him ; then resumed her knitting needles. It seemed as if she wanted courage to speak. She wanted strength to hear the avowal of that

unhappiness in words, of the existence of which she was become too well aware.

But he sat there looking so thoughtful and so sad, and now and then such a heavy sigh escaped him, that she could stand it no longer, and she broke silence with,—

“I see how it is, Walter; do not attempt to hide it from me. You are no longer contented. What shall we both do ?”

He turned from the window, and still resting his face upon his hand, looked at her, and kept looking at her steadily and mournfully ; but he made no answer for some time. At last he said, slowly,—

“I am at contradiction with myself ; and my whole mind is at war. ‘There was war in heaven,’ ” he went on, quoting from the Revelations ; for, as I told you, the Bible had been almost his sole study, and from it his mind had been fed, and his imagination received its images,—“Michael and his angels

against the devil and his angels." I know not whether the contention within me is for good or for evil—I know not whether the combatants belong to the heavenly or to the infernal spirits. If discontent, and dissatisfaction, and inward rebellion, and murmurings be wrong, then they are voices from beneath ; but there is something that tells me that they are not altogether wrong.—That such conflicts are the stirring of the *man* within me—the awakening of a being who has ceased to be a child—the immortal man who feels he can do something, and ought to do something."

"I understand you in part," said his mother, gently. "I have, in my girlhood, when I was younger than you, Walter, felt the wild force of these internal conflicts, though in me proceeding from a different cause. I had the same difficulty of distinguishing what **was** wrong in my thoughts and wishes from what **was** right—Which side was from above, which

from beneath. I suffered myself to be driven a poor, passive weed by the force of circumstances, and they have landed me here."

"But what I feel," he replied, with energy, "is, that I must not suffer myself to be the passive sport of circumstances. My rebellion is exactly against that quiet tranquillity which some people call content, which I see is the portion of all around me—that which makes these poor, ignorant beings, among whom we dwell, happy with the narrow course of their existence. I ought to honour them, perhaps, for this. Submission to the inevitable must be a virtue. But it is one I can no longer—it is one I *will* no longer attempt to practice."

"*Will!*" said she, sorrowfully,—"*will* not attempt . . ."

"No," answered he, with firmness. "My will has changed its nature. I used to will

what I thought I *ought* to will ; now I will, because I will *will*."

" Ah, you puzzle me with these distinctions, my dear. Will, will ! There is one supreme Will, and that alone we ought to obey."

" Ay, if we knew it.—Yes, I do think," said he, rising and approaching her, " I still think that if I did indeed read *his* will in the circumstances which surround me, I could,—perhaps I could, submit to it."

" Ah, perhaps!" with a look almost of terror.

" I say perhaps, because I am only just beginning to know myself. I was a stranger to myself till lately. I neither knew my own strength nor my own weakness. I was a stranger to my power to submit. I was a stranger to my power to resist,—both are strong with me. Perhaps?—Why should I be better than others have been?—Perhaps,—this trial is too strong for me,—Perhaps," he cried, passionately, " if

I felt myself condemned irretrievably to this insupportable vacuity of existence—perhaps I might rebel!"

"Oh, my son! Oh, Walter, what is it you say?—What is it that I hear?—Rebel against God! My own dear child, think how dreadfully you are talking."

"It would indeed be a fearful thing," he said, gloomily.

"But to what,—to what," he cried, after a short silence, "to what wild thoughts does not this dreary mountain solitude expose us? The demon, we are told, dwells in desert places, seeking rest and finding none. What if I meet him in these places, so properly his own! What if I become a prey, in the dead vacuity of my own mind and heart, to the evil suggestions of the bad but plausible spirit!"

"I know not!—Sometimes I feel that I care not,"—he went on, sinking back into his chair,—“so that I were delivered from

myself, I care not by what means, or how."

Lilla now laid down her knitting in her lap, and looked steadily at her son.

There was a wild, wandering, passionate fire in his eye, and his cheek was burning as he spoke.

As he sank back in his chair, the flashing eye half closed, and the cheek grew pale. A sullen air of gloomy, almost sulky, resolution, succeeded to the proud defiance of the moment before.

The wisdom of Lilla was simple, and her experience narrow ; but her perceptions were clear, and her understanding sound.

She did not believe, as many might have done, that her son was possessed by one of those devils of which she had read in Scripture ; a species of evil, whatever it was, which seems to have vanished in these our latter days, but she saw he was visited by what may

be called the true demon of these days,—powers without objects for their exercise, and which, for want of their due and wholesome employment, were fastening upon, and eating the heart.

This life, which had sufficed for them both till now, would suffice no longer.

She had hoped to live on in this quiet solitude, companioned by her son, content and tranquil. So long as he was with her, her happiness was secure, she wanted nothing more; she had looked no further than this. They were to continue to live together when Wilkinson was gone, just as they had done during his lifetime.

But now she saw this could not be; she understood the evil, and she saw the remedy.

“Then we must separate,” she said.

“And leave you, mother, here!” his feelings getting the upper hand again as he spoke.
“Leave you here! And if I feel this existence

so lonely and miserable whilst we are together, what will you find it when I am gone?"

" Neither lonely nor miserable altogether, I trust, Walter. There are those who neither leave us nor forsake us."

" I can never leave you!" he cried.

" Nay, do not say so. The time at last arrives with all, when the tie which unites the mother and her child must be parted. You must go out into the world,—you must and you shall. How,—where,—I do not know yet. We must think of that. But go you must, and shall."

" Perhaps," she went on, for she had stopped a little to recover breath, and steady her faltering voice,—" Perhaps, when you *have* seen of what the world is composed, you may find the existence here more tolerable than you do now. Walter, perhaps you, like many others I have heard of, may be glad to come back to the quiet old haven at the end ; that hope

shall be my comfort, but you must not think of me. I shall get along with poor Joseph whilst he lives, and as well as I can when he dies; and you must come and see me pretty often, Walter."

"Mother, say no more about it, I am not going to leave you."

But whilst the words had scarcely passed his lips, the invincible desire to go, the sense of the absolute necessity that he should go, checked him.

She shook her head, and smiled sadly. She saw how it was; his countenance rarely deceived her; she read in it as in a book.—Great love makes us very penetrating.

"We must not dispute about the object in view, my love, for that object I am resolved, please God, to effect some way or other. The way or other, is what we had best talk about. How can you go, and what can you do?"

They were got to realities at last; the

unscaleable precipices themselves did not seem to form a more impassable barrier to the foot of man than did those invincible fetters of necessity with which they found themselves fettered, oppose a boundary to their wishes.

They had not five pounds of money among them all,—I believe not two.

“ I should want very little money,” he said, —“ I am not going out like a fine gentleman, to sit with my hands folded before me. Half a dozen shillings to begin with will do ; I shall find employment of some kind or other somewhere or other. What I want, what I thirst so insatiably for, is the opportunity of mixing with men. To exchange this solitary life for the busy life of busy men,—I care little how or where, so that I can go into the world and struggle with it.”

He was a poet, this youth ; but his poetry was the poetry of action, still more than of description and sentiment. His thoughts ran

upon the dramatic part of human life, if one may say so; he wanted to *play* a part, as well as to describe it. A man may be a poet one way as much as another; in either he is animated and urged onward by his imagination.

"My dear child, what do you think to gain by that? *You* find yourself happy in some low occupation, where you would have to associate with men, a vast deal worse, and almost more ignorant, than your poor darkened neighbours here? That would never, never do, Walter?"

Joseph was better. He sat up in his bed now. The mother and son agreed that they would consult him; though consult seemed scarcely the proper word to use, for consultation was not exactly what one thought of when one had to do with poor Joseph; but it seemed right and proper to have no disguises with their good old friend; and when they

discussed the matter over with him, it was possible he might offer some good suggestions.

To the surprise and satisfaction of both, Joseph did not seem very much astonished, nor at all shocked at the idea.

He looked at the well-grown young man before him, and he said, with some satisfaction,—

“When I was a stripling like you, I felt much as you do. Yes, young man, inferior to you as I am in natural gifts, a thing I know very well, yet even I—we all of us—feel much in the same way at the same age, though some more strongly, some less so. At your years, one wants to be stirring. One feels as if one must stir. Though at mine we want to sit still, and we must sit still. There is a time for all things, and a season for everything under the sun.”

“I am glad to hear you speak in this man-

ner, dear Joseph. It comforts me very much when you and I agree. So you do not think it very wrong, of dear Walter, to want to go out from us and see a little more of the world?"

"Much more wrong if he didn't—very odd if he didn't. He's not the lad to moither after a few sheep and black heifers all his life."

Walter could not help taking hold of the old man's hand, and shaking it; but he said,

"I am afraid you and my mother will want me."

"That's what you young ones are always fancying. We are glad enough to have you, that's true enough; but want you we shan't, as long as I can toddle about, and look after things a bit, and I'm getting better a-pace.

Poor Lilla! She thought how different her feelings were from his. How deeply, how dreadfully, *she* should miss her son!

To have only poor dear Joseph in his place.

Oh, the blank before her ! All she said was,

“ No, Joseph, don’t say we shall not miss him. I am sure we both shall miss him very much ; but we will not think of that ; let us talk about how it must all be managed, and how we must start him.”

“ As a pedlar,” said Joseph.

Both mother and son uttered a cry of surprise.

“ As a pedlar,” repeated Joseph. “ You would not have him begin as a vagrant, with nothing on earth to do ; as a beggar, with nothing to live upon but other people’s money. Let him go as a pedlar, unless he will go as a drover, and drive his own sheep and cattle to England. But the pedlar would be the best of the two.

“ Consider,” he went on. “ The life of a pedlar is nothing so disagreeable, after all ; and for seeing the world, which I take is the

main object Master Walter has in view, who sees it like the pedlar? He is welcome at hall and cabin, guest-house and cottage, market and fair; because, wherever he goes, he takes his welcome with him. He has upon his back what people want; and we must carry something about us, in some shape or other, which people want, or they will not be long glad to see us. Some want our money and some want our help; and some want our wisdom, and some want our wit; and some want our company, and some few want our love. Now money he has none, and help he has none to give, and he may carry his wisdom to market, such as he has, and who will he find to ask him for it? Wit and fun everybody wants, but he has not much more of that, poor fellow, than of money; and as for his company, who wants the company of those who have nothing else to give? As for his love, he'll want other people's, when he leaves

you and me ; but he'll find nobody that'll want his.

"No ; let him take a well-filled pack, with calicoes and silk handkerchers, ribbons, bits of finery, and a few penknives, scissors and pin-cushions, and so forth. Everybody wants such things, and I'll be bound for it he'll find his welcome anywhere."

Oh reality, reality ! Oh, thou miserable reducer of high imaginings to their just standard !

The idea thus presented by Joseph, whether he intended it so or not, effectually dissipated the visions of the mother and son.

The mother had seen such merchants as Joseph spoke of travelling along dusty roads with their packs upon their backs, and so, indeed, had the son. Actual pedlars are not exactly the people one should feel best inclined

to assume the part of ; and they had neither of them read “Wordsworth’s Excursion.” They had not had their imaginations kindled, as those of some have been kindled, by the poet’s description of this errant life of adventure, and of all those different valuables, which Joseph enumerated, and that the pedlar of old carried and dispensed from fire-side to fire-side, beside the wares in his pack. Simple days were those of pedlar importance, when all the world sat still, and the travelling merchant was one of the chief moving powers among them. How different now? The pedlar it is who sits still, whilst all the world is moving around him.

The pedlar had, even in Joseph Wilkinson’s time of day, become almost an imaginary personage ; but the good old man recollects him as he was, when he himself was a boy some seventy years before, and the welcome he used to receive in the secluded vales of Wales. He

recollected well the important part he played sitting by the fire-side in the lonely cottages, telling his tales of adventure, and relating what was going on in that world, the most distant rumour of which, save in this way, never reached them. So he who had now for so many years been accustomed to see Lilla and her son plying the humblest part so simply and unaffectedly as they did, had learned, at last, to forget, as people are apt to do, that they could ever have been fitted for another. Thus it really was not with any idea of disgusting Walter with his scheme, that he made the proposal, but in simple good faith, as the best thing that could be thought of.

It served, however, as I have said, for the present, whether intended or not, as a perfect extinguisher upon the imaginings of both mother and son. And so the subject was dropped.

There is a sort of relief to the restless hungering of the mind after change, when even the attempt to make a change has been talked over, the mere discussion of the subject satisfies the longing for a time.

What Joseph Wilkinson had said produced this effect upon Walter, by damping those bright visions of the future, which he had found so alluring.

But what a pity they must be dropped ! What a pity, and ten thousand pities it is, when this generous fervour, this desire for action is checked, or destroyed, or misdirected, through narrow circumstances !

Ah ! how many and many kindling spirits at eighteen have I lived to see thus chilled and extinguished before five-and-twenty !

“ Ah, Mr. Craiglethorpe, where were you ? Where were you ? Whilst this fine youth —this darling treasure of the woman you

once adored—this sole descendant of the valued friend you so cherished, was pining away in inaction, wanting only a few of your useless hundreds."

Alas ! Walter did begin at last, really to pine. To become a victim to that saddest mental disease, internal pining.

Fits of the blackest melancholy—the melancholy that cuts the heart—the melancholy of unemployed powers feeding upon themselves ; that dire infliction which attacks more peculiarly the ardent-minded and the young, when cheated in their best hopes and fondest expectations, gradually became the almost habitual attendant upon, instead of the occasional visitor, of this hapless and gifted boy. His mother, constituted so happily by nature, possessing such buoyant spirits and elasticity of

mind, had been ever a stranger to this cruel, cruel foe of humanity.

But she saw her son growing more and more unhappy, and her wretchedness kept pace with his.

With what anguish did she see him come in from his daily occupation among the mountains, no longer healthful, happy, and bright, with the colour raised by the fresh breezes upon his cheek, and his eye lambent with spirit and enthusiasm! Now his complexion was pale and yellow,—his eye was dim,—his lips almost colourless,—his gait heavy,—his nerves relaxed. He would enter the cottage, and sit silently down, answering the caresses which she lavished upon him with a gentle impatience, as if they were irksome rather than consoling; though he was too feeling and good to repel them.

He would sit at the window in his old attitude; his arms crossed, and resting upon the

window-sill, his chin upon his arms, his eyes fixed upon those mountains, those mountains which shut in his prospects. The life in a valley is dreadfully oppressive where there is a disease on the spirits.

Happy hills for me—happy vallies I find it difficult to believe in.

Then his mother, in her anguish, would speak again of his leaving them,—of his going into the world—would entertain the idea suggested by Joseph. Even the pedlar's pack. For something must be done.

But it was too late.

“ My dear Walter, you are getting quite ill and melancholy. You really must put your plan into execution ; you must leave us for a while.”

“ It is not to be done.”

“ But I don't know that. At first, you know, we both of us thought poor Joseph's plan quite a ridiculous one, but I have been

thinking of it a good deal lately, since I saw you look so sadly. Anything is better than this misery. My dear, I don't think that, after all, for a beginning, the plan he proposes would be so very bad. There is nothing one cannot accustom oneself to with a hearty good will."

" But I have no good will to it."

" Nay, but when you long so for a change, and it seems so necessary to you, a little pride and nicety ought not to stand in the way. Oh, Walter! what have we to do with pride?"

" Nothing, indeed."

" Then why will you not think of the only means, as it seems to me, by which you can effect what you wish?"

" I have lost the wish."

" Do you really say so?" with a sudden feeling of joy. Ah, how mistaken! " Then can you be happy to stay here?"

"No,—but I know that I can be happy nowhere."

The whole evil was comprehended in that short sentence. He who has lost his belief in happiness, has done with life ; there is nothing left in it for him.

The mother, happily for herself, did not yet understand all that that sentence included.

The scene was soon still further darkened by the increased illness, and finally by the death of Joseph Wilkinson.

Death's gloomy shadow darkened over the little home. Till death has visited it, every home may, in a certain degree, be pronounced cheerful. It wanted but this to add the last shade to the gloom which was fast settling upon the young man's spirits. Sad

events sometimes arouse the mind,—real grief will frequently dissipate imaginary gloom,—or rather, we should say, the gloom which arises from the wants of the imagination,—but it did not prove so in this instance.

CHAPTER X.

“ Seem’st thou dimly to remember
Some sweet spot ne’er seen before,
To have visited or known it,
Or in dreams or times of yore ?

“ Doth a word send waking fancies
Ringing thought’s familiar train,
Faint and distant, yet familiar.
Where and when we seek in vain ?”

MRS. ACTON TINDAL.

THEY are there, the three friends, for the last time in this world, together.

Joseph Wilkinson lies on his humble bed, quiet and composed, and perfectly sensible, awaiting his last hour.

The last hour comes, as it should come to the just man, in a holy sense of peace,

approaching to rapture. The simple, pious mind, returning to its Creator, resting upon Him who taught our poor, feeble spirits where to rest their doubts and fears—upon the mysterious aids of our Pastor and our Lord.

Joseph Wilkinson was an ignorant, uneducated man,—but he was in this happier than many wiser and more instructed than he. His thoughts once fixed upon that great idea of religious responsibility and trust,—of a life after this, and of a judgment to come,—had never been diverted by a vain philosophy, had never known the pangs of hesitation and doubt.

The human mind is naturally constituted to receive religion; and the simple mind, in its childlike faith, perhaps to enjoy its benefits in their most effectual form. To the ordinary man, a God Almighty above, his friend and protector in difficulty,—his merciful, gracious Father,—who regards him in his obscurity,

pities him in suffering, and consoles him on his death-bed,—is a source of confidence, trust, and reliance, which no human assistance, be it what it may, can supply.

But more,—the belief in the all-seeing eye, from which no secret action or thought is hid,—of a pure and Holy God, who charges the angels with folly,—of a judgment to come,—a dread and certain account, from which no human being can escape, when neither evasions, nor pretences, nor disguises, can avail,—approaching slowly, surely, inevitably,—sooner or later, what we must all come to,—a heaven and hell,—those dread, awful words to the imagination ; a final sentence,—all that is dark, all that is miserable, against all that is bright, and pure, and holy, and blest,—what an effect does this simple persuasion produce !

A God above all, holy, and just, and good ; and Jesus Christ, his blessed and only Son,

who suffered to redeem miserable sinners. A judgment to come, where Christ, who descended to the form of a man, shall appear in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, summoning every soul to judgment!

What facts and impressions are these!

Oh! did those mistaken men, who carelessly shake the poor man's faith in his Bible—Oh! did those blind and perverted men, who circulate among our lower orders open, undisguised infidelity—nay, atheism; teaching them to blaspheme that God, whose existence the most daring among them cannot *utterly* deny—Oh! did they but reflect upon what they are about! What death of the soul! What destruction of all that dignifies and elevates human nature above that of the beasts that perish, is their work!

Would they but think!

The worst, the most depraved amongst them, the basest of those vile hirelings of a

cheap press, who, from factious ambition, or still baser hunger of gain—go on, from day to day, administering poison to the souls of their fellow-creatures, would pause and shudder at what they were doing.

Oh! would they but once consider—these preachers of social humanity, so ready to inveigh against the oppressions of others—of what *they* themselves were robbing the poor man!

Consolation in sorrow, moral strength against temptation, lofty imaginings, tender well-springs of gratitude and hope!—Treasures, in comparison with which how base and contemptible is all that the luxury of riches—the pride of princes—could bestow!

Oh! would they but consider the cruel, cruel part they are playing, heart of man could not resist the contemplation—heart of man could not be found so utterly barbarous, so basely selfish as to persist in the wrong.

And even were these treasures of which I speak but *imaginary* treasures, as these writers to whom I allude profess to believe?—Be it so. Who would rob a poor, indigent fellow-creature of even an imaginary treasure, when there was nothing to substitute in its place—Absolutely nothing?

Who would kill hope, if hope was the best possession a poor fellow had? Who wittingly awaken a poor sufferer from a happy dream?

But what if these things be *true*?

What if there be a God who actually reigns and takes account? What if there be a Providence above, and a judgment to come? And what if it be true—an inevitable law of his creation, that those who do evil shall enter into condemnation?

How will it be with these evil teachers then?

These men, who abuse one of the noblest gifts of God—the art of letters and of print-

ing—to the wicked purposes of endeavouring to eradicate the most momentous, most important, most valuable of truths from the minds of their fellow-creatures.

It would be well if such men sometimes reflected that these things may possibly *be*, though a set of penny newspapers—a Northern Star, a Reynolds' Miscellany, a Working Man's Friend! a Reasoner! a Lancashire Beacon, a Family Herald—deny them.

The death of a good man, when not attended by any particular physical distress which renders it painful, has always appeared to me the most beautiful picture in the world. To my fancy, the beams of heaven seem to gild the decline—to my heart, the peaceful tranquillity is like a precious balm, hallowing,

softening, subduing all that is stormy, rebellious, or despairing in our feelings.

So felt Lilla, as she sat weeping by the head of poor Joseph's bed, with his hand in hers, now and then wiping the cold dew-drops from his brow, and now and then impressing a kiss upon the hand she held, which gently answered to her affectionate pressure.

Thus to die, supported and soothed by the presence of the being he loved above all things, who was to him as the personification of all that was pure, excellent, and beautiful in the universe—was almost a recompense in itself for everything he had done.

Sometimes the grey eye closed, as if in slumber; sometimes the heavy lids were raised, and the eye was fixed upon her with one intense, loving gaze.

Now it would turn to him who stood at the foot of the bed, watching the approaching change with a strange, awe-struck curiosity—

such as a thinking mind feels when first called upon to confront death—to realize the awful truth, that the soul of man must vanish.

Where?

Ah! that was the question upon which his thoughts were busy.

The heart of Lilla was alive only to the approaching separation, and soft tears of tenderness were flowing over her cheeks at the idea of parting with her good old friend.

It was the intellect of her son which was chiefly at work, speculating upon and endeavouring to comprehend the awful, the wondrous, the overwhelming truth, that man *must die*.

Joseph Wilkinson had been dozing. Suddenly he opened his eyes, more bright, more living than they had been for years. The flame suddenly leaped upwards in the socket.

He stretched out his hand to Walter, and said:

“Young man, I am about to go to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. So spake our blessed Saviour, when He was about to depart—may I, in deep reverence, say the same to you.

“Don’t forget *Him*. He will be a lamp to your feet, and a candle to your steps. I am coming nearer to Him, now that my body is about to return to dust; for the spirit is going to Him who gave it. Farewell! I know that my Redeemer liveth; and in that trust, oh, Lord! receive my spirit.”

And he closed his eyes, and was among the departed.

They laid him in his grave, and shed many loving tears over him.

And days passed over their heads, and then this present world came and put in its claims, claims that *must* be looked to, and ought to be listened to, and Lilla's attention was again directed to her son.

The little tenement now was their own, and she could do with it what she liked—sell it or mortgage it.

The expenses of Joseph's funeral, simple as it was ; the law expenses consequent upon the will, enormous when the property was, as in this case, bequeathed to a stranger ; proved a heavy embarrassment.

Money must be provided. Should they sell the little domain for what it would fetch, or how ?

Had Walter followed his own wishes—his own ardent wishes—suffered himself to be prompted by his devouring thirst for freedom, and the life of the outer world, he would have at once decided upon what to have done.—

Sold the property at any cost, and been away.

But excited as his imagination had become, the rectitude and goodness of his heart was strong as ever. He thought upon his mother, upon this home, to which she had been so long accustomed, and where she was content and happy ; he looked upon those hairs, now slightly silvery with the effects of labour and care ; upon her slight, delicate frame, and her face so full of feeling. Little as he yet knew of the world, yet it always presented itself to his fancy as a scene of struggle and strenuous endeavour, and he felt it was no longer fitted for her.

Besides, the little lawyer at Festiniog, whom he consulted, assured him—for it happened to be a season of agricultural depression—that there would be the greatest loss in parting with the property at that moment ; so he advised him to mortgage it to enable him to pay the debts.

This plan, as the simplest and readiest method of setting his mother at ease, was at once adopted; but the interest of this mortgage was as a heavy weight of iron, added to the other fetters which already oppressed him.

He did, indeed, now find himself like a serf bound to the soil.

To escape was no longer possible. His mother must be supported; his only chance of feeding either her or himself rested upon this little farm.

He laboured more assiduously than ever.

Times were bad. There was a great fall in the value of agricultural produce; the burden fell most heavily upon those situated like him, as proprietor and farmer in one.

The markets were low; his Welsh sheep and his Welsh bullocks met a heavy sale. The interest of his mortgage, the little taxes on his farm must be met; his

mother and he sometimes almost wanted bread.

He laboured hard ; but he was not formed for hard bodily labour, still less to endure with impunity continued mental anxiety ; he was of too fine and too sensitive a temperament, too excitable an imagination, and too delicate a frame to struggle with external hardships, and with that tormenting demon within, whose promptings even hardships could not silence.

He was unhappy, and the more unhappy because he felt his powers of resistance against these evils daily diminishing.

He had *not* that strength which could move mountains—that strength which supported his mother. He was arrived at that age when intellects like his are proving all things, are in that painful state of questioning, of transition, through which every mind of fine faculties must, sooner or later, pass.

These things altogether were too much for him.

He grows thinner and thinner ; his appetite altogether fails ; his limbs refuse their offices ; sleep forsakes his pillow ; what should have been the sweet refreshing forgetfulness of the night becomes only a season for more excited thought, for wilder visions, more distorting anxieties—all the horrors of despair !

She was patient, she looked up to God, she rested upon his promises. He had promised her help in the hour of her necessity, deliverance in the hour of death. She felt that an hour worse than that of death was approaching.

She looked up to heaven, and was resigned and patient.

“ Thou knowest, Oh, Lord, and thou only

knowest what is best for us both, and Thy holy will be done."

She had left him asleep upon his little bed, after a day of more than common fatigue. The day had been a heavy one for both. He had been more weak, feverish, and exhausted than usual ; and though he made almost superhuman efforts to preserve an appearance of cheerfulness, had been unable altogether to disguise his depression. It was *his* unhappiness alone that was to his mother more than she could bear. A mother has resignation for her own sufferings, but who shall teach her to bear those of her child ?

The evening was still, and the air soft. She had sat by his side some time ; at last he had fallen asleep ; he seemed to slumber soundly. She felt the need of refreshment ; she wanted to be by herself—to rest from the contemplation of this image of gradual decay, that she might gather her thoughts together,

and strengthen herself by meditation and prayer.

She stole gently out of the room—left the cottage—strayed through the little fields—followed the mountain-path that led to the solitudes behind, and wandering on and on, as the path ascended, at length seated herself upon a small projecting rock which looked over the vale, or rather small amphitheatre, closed by the mountain beyond.

She sat and gazed around her in a sort of vague reverie—her eye filled with the noble landscape of mountain scenery before her. The pure blue sky was smiling over her head—the declining sun was flinging deep shadows over the vale, and lustrously tinting the peaks of the mountains ; the sheep and black cattle were speckling the little green spaces between the rocks, and all was perfectly still ; the deep silence unbroken by the slightest sound.

There was something healing and tranquilizing in this calm solitude.

She had come out there to pray ; but her mind felt scarcely capable even of prayer. The sense of what was coming upon her—of the loneliness preparing for her—of herself alone, alone in this wide world, as she soon must be,—these subdued, overpowered her. She looked round ; she cast an appealing glance to the sky. Would there be pity for her there ? Her heart melted within her, and she shed many tears.

She sat there with her handkerchief pressed to her eyes, weeping—weeping, a relief she seldom indulged in. It seemed to do her good.

She was not aware of a figure slowly descending among the crags of a neighbouring spar of the mountain. A man was coming down there, who had spent the whole day scrambling among those heights.

That man had been one to whom once the voice of Nature spoke in vain : he had ears, but heard not, he had eyes, but saw not. That music of the spheres, which fables the sweet harmonies of those laws which produce the unimaginable beauty around us, was unheard by him. He had lived amidst the turbulence of worldly contentions and interests of men, his enjoyments made up of its unsatisfying pleasures—but circumstances the most appalling had awakened the better man within him. “The eyes of the blind had been opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped ;” and he had seen and heard.

Had seen what he was, and what he *might* have been—beheld things in the light of absolute truth and reality, and had listened to a voice—the voice of conscience within, and of nature without—for which, till then, he had had no ear.

He had been deeply, deeply moved.

His was not a nature easily to receive impressions ; but once received, they were indelible.

He had not read that commentary upon a long past life thus suddenly presented to him, to shudder at it for a day, and then relapse into what he was before. He was one who did not easily forget. The past to him was as is the present ; its history could not be effaced. His regrets were lasting as they were poignant.

He had become altogether an altered man. Much softened and much amended in every way ; but the most remarkable change that had taken place was in his habits.

He, who had only frequented men, lived with men, lived only for men, now began to feel within him a complete alienation from general society, and a yet greater love for that of nature.

His mind, once strung to this high pitch, retained it, and association with those among

whom he had hitherto been accustomed to pass his life, became disgusting in the extreme. There was no longer any harmony between the without and the within,—the contradiction was irritating, he avoided it.

With Harry, and Flavia, and Caroline alone, did he feel sympathy. They were in the same *mode*, to carry on the illustration. They, too, had been weaned from the life of society and of convention by the course of events. After all they had gone through, the only element in which they could breathe freely was that of a peaceful seclusion.

Mr. Craiglethorpe had gone down with them into Wales.

There he found a pleasure altogether new but most fascinating, in solitary rambles among the wild mountains that surrounded him. Day after day he spent thus, not so much communing with himself, as in melancholy but not unpleasing reverie. One feeling was ever

present, ever soothing, ever consoling, in the midst of his most poignant regrets ; she *had* loved him, it was certain she once *had* loved him. That assurance was a compensation that atoned for much. Still he had deserted her, he had left her, abandoned her to her difficulties and her struggles, when he might have rescued her. This was a thought which could not be got over ; it seemed as food for never-ending remorse. That she had vanished altogether—that the hour of reparation had passed away—that he was not worthy to be allowed the privilege of atonement—these were the thoughts that pressed most heavily upon him. What would he not have given but to see her once more ! To confess all ! and receive from those lips forgiveness ?

His repentance had been deep, his contrition great ; late as it was in life he had become a new creature. The better parts of his character had at last achieved the triumph over

the baser; he had entered into the higher existence.

He came stumbling down the rocks awkwardly as of old ; for, much as he was improved in other things, no great change for the better had been produced in his outer man ; and when he got down to the edge of the stream, he looked round, not knowing exactly where he was. The sun, now about to set, gave him the points of the compass, and he calculated in what direction Henry's house must lie ; but he was a good deal tired with his wanderings of five or six hours, and he wished, if it might be, to find an easier way homewards than that by which he had come.

This little worn mountain path presented itself, and he began to follow it, assured that

it must lead, sooner or later, to some habitation.

The path ascended and descended, winding among the crags and the little green nooks between them, till it made a sudden turn round an abrupt rocky projection. A little green platform was displayed before him, rough stones lay scattered about it here and there ; upon one sat a woman weeping. Did his heart beat with a strange presentiment ? or was it the steep ascent which had made his breath come thick and short ? Did his limbs tremble merely with fatigue, or was it something more ? Are there, or are there not, mysterious sympathies which warn us that the hour of the crisis is drawing nigh ?

He feared to disturb her, and was stepping softly back ; but there was something in her attitude that arrested him. Was it pity for her evidently deep sorrow that moved him ?

True, he had become much more tender-hearted and inclined to sympathise with sorrow than he had used to be—but, was that all ?

Hearing a step, she hastily passed her handkerchief across her eyes, and looked up.

Those eyes—those never-to-be-forgotten eyes !

Was it—was it—could it be—?

He stood suddenly before her.

She started and screamed.

“ Lilla—Lilla Fleming !”

“ Mr. Craiglethorpe !”

He had her in his arms.

She wept plenteously, her face hidden upon his shoulder ; whilst he, quivering, shaking, with indescribable emotion, with ineffable joy, was hardly able to stand.

She was there, with her face against his breast, weeping, weeping, weeping all her woman's heart away ; and he, with his arms round her, receiving upon his bosom the flood of her tears.

Oh, he had not perhaps deserved that moment ! but Heaven in its mercies is plenteous. He had been a sincere penitent, and was an altered man.

Oh, then, he knew what it must be in that better world, when “friends shall meet and know each other's face.”

Five-and-twenty years—what was that ? The heart was unchanged. Such things admit no measure of time. They are from the Infinite—they know not time.

When she had recovered from her weeping fit, they sat down together upon those stones side by side, and they felt as if they had never been parted. Oh, the sweetness of such meetings, of such moments ! The veil which had

so long separated them was at once withdrawn, and they understood the truth at last. There was no need for words ; there are feelings too deep for words. They both understood at once *now* how it had been ever.

After a while Lilla rose and said she must go home, and together they descended to the cottage. She led the way, and he followed in silence. At length they reached the humble dwelling, and Mr. Craiglethorpe saw her son—the son of Lilla and Valentine !

The story draws to a close. There is little more to relate, for you will guess how it ended.

Lilla and Mr. Craiglethorpe parted no more. He adopted her son.

Henry, Flavia, and Caroline—Lilla and Mr. Craiglethorpe, were as one family ; but the chief interest of this little circle was centred upon the young man.

There was yet time to save him from

the fate which had been impending, and Mr. Craiglethorpe was allowed this high privilege at least—a privilege he estimated at its full value.

They all lived *very* happy ever afterwards.

The end of life should be like a sweet, tranquil autumn evening, with the promise of a coming spring before it.

Old age at rest, and the year of mortality approaching to its close ; but a new life rising beyond it—a new creation for the coming year—carrying us forward in hope even in this world. The young are plants rising, as the trees of the forest fall.

A tender friendship based upon the reminiscences of a once fervent love, is perhaps among the sweetest and purest sentiments that can visit the human heart.

Love freed from the contradictions and passions which belong to this world—strong, enduring—stronger and stronger, and sweeter and sweeter every passing hour.

Earnest of that heaven, where Love shall at last be united unto Joy, his eternal and long-betrothed bride.

Best gift of that Divine, Ineffable, and Almighty, who has given unto us richly all things to enjoy.

THE END.

WORKS BY THE AUTHOR OF
“TIME, THE AVENGER.”

I.
THE WILMINGTONS.
SECOND EDITION.

By the Author of “TIME THE AVENGER,” “EMILIA WYNDHAM,”
“Two OLD MEN’S TALES,” &c. 3. Vols.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

“A most interesting tale, written with excellent feeling, full of charming traits of character, and developing a highly instructive moral.”—*Examiner*.

“‘The Wilmingtons’ contains scenes which no living author save the writer of ‘Two Old Men’s Tales’ could have written so well. Few will be able to escape from this new story when they have once entered upon it.”—*Athenaeum*.

“Of all the novels of the last twelve months this beautiful story is in our estimation the best written, the most ingeniously contrived, the healthiest in sentiment, and the most pathetic in interest.”—*Morning Post*.

“‘The Wilmingtons’ is a work of art of the very highest stamp, both in conception and execution, and above all in the high moral tone which pervades it. The skill of the author in pourtraying the human character, admirable as it is, is yet forgotten in the powerful dramatic effect of the situations in which they are displayed.”—*John Bull*.

“It argues well for the character of a people when, in their popular literature, the good is ever found in association with the beautiful: and we regard the eminent success of this author’s works as a very favourable attestation of the soundness of our public opinion. The author is indisputably a writer of true genius and of great power, but is also one who dedicates high endowments to the service of Him who has given them. The popularity of such a writer is creditable to a people—the productions of such a writer must necessarily exert a beneficial influence over a people prepared to prize them. They all bear the impress of sterling English morality—all minister to generous emotions, generous scorn of what is base, generous admiration of excellence; and all inculcate respect for principle, by which emotions ought to be governed—all minister to the exaltation of justice.”—*Dublin University Magazine*.

II.

LETTICE ARNOLD.

SECOND EDITION. 2 Vols.

“We cordially recommend this admirable and beautiful story to our readers. It is a healthy moral tale—truthful and practical—told in a most charming manner”—*Weekly Chronicle*.

HENRY COLBURN, Publisher, 13, Great Marlborough Street.







UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 051353768